


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
St18h
v. 3



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

HELEN CAMERON:

From Grub to Butterfly.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "MARY STANLEY; OR, THE SECRET ONES."

"I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in diverse tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1871.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.,
CITY ROAD.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. Frederick Randal	1
II. Sal Volatile	11
III. What came of the "Purpis"	25
IV. A False Step	36
V. A False Position	50
VI. Another Ball	66
VII. Cupid at Play	83
VIII. Nicholas	94
IX. The False Position Falser Still	102
X. The Necklace	113
XI. Lady Romford	124
XII. Home Plot	133
XIII. Running the Gauntlet	146
XIV. The Cell	161
XV. Waiting for the Verdict	175
XVI. The Shadow of Death	185
XVII. Joey Willing turns up again	194
XVIII. The Alabaster Box	210
XIX. Sal's Treat	227
XX. A Crow crosses Majesty's Path	245
XXI. The Meeting	256
XXII. The Curtain Drops	277

HELEN CAMERON.

BOOK III.

THE BUTTERFLY.

CHAPTER I.

FREDERICK RANDAL.

"Silvius. Sweet Phebe, pity me!

Phebe. Why, I am sorry for thee, gentle Silvius.

Sil. Wherever sorrow is, relief would be;

If you do sorrow at my grief in love,

By giving love, your sorrow and my grief

Were both extermin'd.

Phe. Thou hast my love: is not that neighbourly?

Sil. I would have you."

SHAKSPERE: *As you like it.*

WHILE the things spoken of in the last chapter were going on at Taganrog, events were taking place elsewhere, which claim our notice. If, in these days of discovery, some clever inventor could take out a patent for simultaneously describing two trains of events going on at the same time, what a boon he might bestow on the world—of writers! In the absence of such an invention, I have nothing left but to go back a little way in my story.

We left Helen Cameron stricken down by the news of Captain Maleenovsky's death. When she recovered from the fainting-fit, a dangerous fever followed, which for a time mercifully hindered her mind from dwelling on the dreadful past, and doubtless somewhat blunted the edge of the grief. During all this time, Mrs. Beresford nursed her as tenderly as a mother. It was natural, that, as her outward strength increased, her inward sufferings should become the keener. And then it was that Mrs. Beresford's help became priceless. She did her best to soften the blow which had fallen, and was ever ready with her sympathy and her counsel to uphold the poor stricken girl. I daresay, even without her, the chrysalis would have unfolded into a butterfly; but the process would have been longer and more painful.

Helen was naturally too buoyant to be easily crushed. Moreover, one great element of pain in the past was removed. All uncertainty and doubt about the future was gone. The dreadful reality stared her in the face, and had to be borne. When the first sharpness of the pang was over, a listless mood came over her. Listlessness about everything but one: she longed to go home. Mrs. Beresford begged her to

spend the winter at her house ; but, though by this time she had learnt to love Mrs. Beresford almost as a mother, nothing could shake her resolve to go. Perhaps England, as the scene of the tragedy, had become too gloomy a place to live in. The doctor thought that her wish ought to be gratified ; and, as her health seemed to be re-established, it was decided that she should return to Russia in the autumn.

But how to return ? Go alone again ? Out of the question : never do to risk a repetition of the Boriatinsky scenes ! But who could go with her ? Now, it so happened that Frederick Randal was in England at the time, and expected to return to Russia in October. It was resolved, therefore, after much hesitation, that he should be her escort. Helen herself did not much like the plan ; but, as it became clear that she must either accompany Randal, or else remain in England throughout the winter, she reluctantly consented at last. As the weather in the Baltic would be too severe for Helen by the time they arrived there, it was thought best that they should sail as far as Dantzic, and thence go on to Petersburg by land. The ship *Queen of the Seas* was to sail from Hull to

Dantzie, and Fred was to meet Helen on board the ship.

Mrs. Beresford accompanied Helen to Hull, where Helen was to spend a few weeks at Mr. Robert Cameron's, before she sailed. The parting from her new-found friend was very sad. Strange to think that a few months before she had known nothing of one who now seemed bound up with her life. The only mother she had known! The only being to whom she could open her heart fully! The only confidante of her love to Captain Maleenovsky! The only one who could bind up her wounded spirit! She began to regret that she had not accepted Mrs. Beresford's invitation to spend the winter with her. Why so stubborn? Too late now to recall her choice!

When Mrs. Beresford was gone, the world seemed empty to her. Natural enough that Mrs. Robert Cameron and her daughters should find Helen very dull company. They were strangers, and not very interesting strangers either. Their world lay outside hers. She loved best to sit alone, and indulge her own thoughts; thoughts which she could not share with them. And very dull, gloomy thoughts they were. Mrs. Cameron, a kind-hearted

woman at bottom, humoured her fancy, and often left her alone. She could not understand Helen at all : she had heard her described as a sprightly, brilliant creature, and had anticipated great pleasure from her society ; and she found her a poor, moping, melancholy girl, who, as far as she could make out, did not seem to care for anything in the world. How people overrated everything belonging to heiresses ! A mind, which was scarcely decently good in a poor girl, was lifted into a genius in a rich young lady.

The evening before she sailed, Helen was sitting alone in the drawing-room, when a gentleman was announced. She had scarcely energy enough to ask who it was ; and, before she was aware of it, Frederick Randal had entered the room. He looked stiff and awkward, and bowed low, without even offering to shake hands with her. Poor fellow, he was wondering how she would receive him. Would she deem his visit an intrusion ? He had not spoken to her for a year ; and he had been very much humbled during that time. Helen rose, walked up to him, in a friendly manner, and shook hands with him warmly. Her own sorrow had softened her : she had learnt what

a dreadful thing disappointed love was ; and, at that moment, she was in a mood to pity him with her whole heart and soul. Besides, her conscience had been busy with her while her head was low ; and she had looked back with something like remorse on the way in which she had treated Fred, and was longing by present kindness to make amends for past wrong.

Randal was taken aback : his most sanguine hopes had not foreshadowed such a reception.

"I thought, Miss Cameron," he said, after the greeting was over, "as I was in Hull, I might as well call and see if there was anything I could do for you."

"I am much obliged to you," answered Helen ; "and I am very glad to see you, dear Fred."

Randal's heart was beating fast : what did it all mean ? How beautiful she looked ! But, oh, how sad and weary she seemed through it all ! He had not noticed it before ; but now it cut him to the heart.

"I am afraid you have been very ill," he remarked in a feeling tone.

"Yes, dear Fred ; very, very ill."

"I heard you had not been well ; but I had no idea it was anything so bad as this."

"I now know the meaning of a hymn which I have often admired without clearly understanding :

'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform :
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.'"

It almost brought the tears to Randal's eyes, to hear her talk in this sad and solemn strain. She, the bright, the sprightly, the full-of-fun ! How changed from the Helen Cameron of old ! What had changed her ? Had Captain Maleenovsky jilted her ?

"Can I do anything for you ?" he asked.

"No, I thank you, Fred."

"Shall I come for you in the morning ?"

"There will be no need for that : Mr. Cameron will see me on board ; and I daresay you have things of your own to look after. But I am much obliged to you, Fred."

"Good-bye, then."

"Stay a moment, Fred ; I have something to tell you before you go. I have long wished to ask your forgiveness. I fear I behaved rather shabbily to you : without meaning anything serious, I fear I led you to hope—— Will you forgive me, Fred ?"

"There is nothing to forgive, Helen," he

answered: "it was all my own fault. I was rude in your house to a gentleman who was your visitor. But, oh, Helen, if you will forgive me; if you will only let me cherish the hope that in time I may again become what I once thought I was to you——"

"Hush, Fred: say no more. The past is a dream which can never return. We can never be what we once were: never—never! Don't think it: don't hope it: don't wish it! It cannot be. I was a thoughtless girl then, and did not know my own mind: I am a woman now, Fred; and I know that it can never be—never! But let us forget and forgive; and henceforth let us be like brother and sister."

"Oh, Helen, have pity on me!" pleaded Fred: "if you only knew what I have suffered this last year, you would not steel your heart against me, Helen."

"Hush, Fred, I do pity you: God knows I do. I know what you have suffered: I did not know then. God forgive me for the pain I have given you thoughtlessly! I have felt it myself; and I can understand it all now. Often and often, when the iron has entered my own soul, I have thought of you."

“If you pity me——”

“No more, Fred, if you pity *me*!” exclaimed Helen, in a touching, beseeching tone: “no more, and never more! I still feel very weak; and I can bear it no longer.”

Frederick Randal was too much of a gentleman to urge her any further at that time. He soon took his leave; but, before he went away, it had become quite clear that a hope had been rekindled in his heart which would not easily be crushed again.

Did Helen see it? I think not: otherwise, I fancy, she would have been sadder still. On the contrary, she felt relieved: her conscience was lighter; for she had done something, however small, toward making up for the wrongs of the past. And, though unconsciously she had re-awakened Randal’s hopes, consciously she had done her best to crush them.

And, yet, she was sad enough, in all conscience. Now that the time for sailing drew so near, she shrank from the thought of going on board again. What painful memories the voyage would recall! Would she not see *his* image everywhere? And what if there were a repetition of the Boriatinsky scenes in another shape? Could she trust Frederick Randal

to protect her? Nay, would not the presence of Fred himself be one of her greatest trials on board? Ah, little she dreamt what was in store for her there !

CHAPTER II.

SAL VOLATILE.

“Now, by the world, it is a lusty wench.”

SHAKSPERE: *Taming of the Shrew.*

ON the deck of the good ship *Queen of the Seas*. Helen, somewhat flushed ; but looking sad notwithstanding, and feeling very low at heart. Mr. Robert Cameron, trying to re-assure her ; speaking words which, as they were commonplace and not likely to touch an answering chord in the sorrow-stricken girl's heart, need not be recorded. A big bouncing girl, very tall and very bony, very gawky and very ungainly, skipping about the deck in a queer shambling fashion, reminding one of a camel's movements. Frederick Randal hovering near, but modestly keeping in the background.

The *Queen of the Seas* still lay at Hull ; but Mr. Cameron's bidding Helen farewell betokened that she was on the point of sailing. As soon as Helen was left alone, the big bouncing girl skipped up to her like a child, and said in a loud tone of voice :

“Be ye Miss Helen Cameron ?”

"Yes."

"I be so glad."

"Why, you don't know me."

"Don't I, though?"

"I have never seen you before."

"But ye've seen my pictur'," said the girl, laughing, and pointing toward Helen's breast.

Now Helen wore on her breast a brooch, with a beautifully-painted miniature outside. Fancying that the girl pointed to that, and thought it like herself, she answered :

"That's a likeness of my late mother."

It looked uncommonly like Helen herself.

"Ye be my pictur'," said the girl.

"What do you mean?"

But the girl did not wait to answer the question. Away she skipped again. Helen could scarcely help laughing at her movements : they were so awkward and ungainly. While Frederick Randal was deliberating whether he should come forward and speak to Helen, the girl returned, holding Joey Willing by the sleeve, and seemingly dragging him in triumph along with her.

"Here she be !" she cried.

Nearly bewildered as Helen was by the mysteriousness of these proceedings, she was

so delighted to see Joey again, that she stepped up to him, and held out her hand. Joey seized the little hand in his own huge palm, and gave it a squeeze, which, if Helen had not been brave, would have made her scream.

"I be main glad to see ye again, miss," he said.

"He's talked of nothing else, miss, iver sin' he come over with ye," said the girl.

"I am just as glad to see you again, Mr. Willing," answered Helen. "But how come you to be here? Are you mate of the *Queen of the Seas* now?"

"Mate indeed!" exclaimed the big bouncing girl scornfully, tossing up her head in a way highly suggestive of dislocation. "I should like to see him mate again: that I should!" This was her playful way of saying that she wouldn't. "Mate indeed! He's been mate long enough, I fancy, miss; and he's been and checkmated 'em at last. Why, miss, he be capt'n now."

"Captain of this ship?"

"To be sure."

"I *am* glad!" cried Helen heartily: "I congratulate you, Mr. Willing," turning to Joey.

Captain Willing, according to his wont, had sheered off after delivering his broadside, but had returned in time to receive Helen's congratulation. So he answered :

"Thank ye heartily, miss. I wanted no hangel to tell me ye 'ould be glad : ye sees, miss, I knew ye 'ould be glad to know as how I were capt'n now."

"Fayther, why don't ye introjue me to Miss Helen Cameron?" asked the big girl.

But Captain Willing was off again. Whether the introduction were too solemn a thing not to need a previous peripatetic preparation, or whether he declined the task altogether, Helen could not say. So she introduced the girl herself :

"So you are Sal?"

"Yes, miss, I be Sal, and no mistake : Flying Sal, as fayther whiles call me, or Sal Volatile. 'Cause why? Ye sees, I can run and leap as good as any man. If iver ye be a-goin' to faint, miss, ye jist send for me and give me a sniff; and I warrants ye, ye'll be all right again. I be famous that way : ask fayther if I aint." And Sal laughed heartily.

"I'm obliged to you," answered Helen, laughing too; "but the *sight* of you will be

enough, I think — you look so big and strong.”

And thereupon, as if to prove that Helen had not overrated her strength, Sal gave her a sample of it which brought tears to Helen’s eyes. Helen had held out her hand; and Sal gave it a squeeze which would not have disgraced her pugilistic father. There was no need for such a proof: Sal looked strong enough to fell a buffalo.

And so this was the original of Sal’s pictur’! Pictur’ looks into the face of Original; Original into the face of Pictur’. Original highly flattered; Pictur’ not so much. Original about as like Pictur’ as a rough shepherd’s colly is like a graceful Italian greyhound. Both, tall, large, and good-looking: both endowed with fair complexions, blue eyes, and golden hair. And that was all.

By this time, Captain Willing had returned, and said to Helen:

“Ye sees, it be ye as have made me capt’n, miss.”

“I?”

“Yes, miss.”

And Captain Willing was off again.

“What does your father mean, Sal?”

“ Well, ye sees, miss, iver sin’ ye come over wi’ ’un in the *Boreas* from Cronstadt, he al’ays say as ye’d be the makin’ on ’un some day,” answered Sal Willing.

“ But how ? ”

“ D’ye mind a jaw ye had wi’ ’un about drinkin’, miss ? ”

“ Mind a jaw ? ”

“ Ay, a confab ; a discoorse.”

“ Well, what then ? ”

“ Fayther, he say to ye : ‘ I’ll not git drunk for your sakes, miss.’ And ye says to fayther : ‘ And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin’ ? And why not for Sal’s sake, Mr. Willin’ ? ’ Well, ye sees, he take that so much to heart, and he be so ashamed like of being screwed up one night, when by rights, as he say, ‘ I ort to hav’ been a-purtectin’ a sweet young leddy as is the pictur’ o’ my Sal,’ that he say, when he come home : ‘ Sal, may ye be spliced to a stinkin’ for’ner, if iver I gits drunk again ! ’ Well, ye sees, last voyage he were as sober as a judge ; and what do the howners of the ship do, but makes him capt’n of the *Queen of the Seas*.”

There was a short pause, after which Joey came round again in the course of his tour,

and, as if he knew that his daughter had made all the needful explanation, went on to say :

“The hegg be hatched, miss.”

And, without waiting for an answer, off he marched again.

“Ye sees, miss,” said Sal, “iver sin’ he met ye, he do talk wonderful on the purpis and the hegg ; and he do say as how he’d rayther not see ye again till the purpis were formed, and the hegg hatched.”

Strange to say, unlike his usual self, Captain Willing had not gone far before he turned back, and returned to Helen. Perhaps he knew that the *Queen of the Seas* would in a few minutes require his undivided allegiance (as she was about to start), and that he should not be able to see Miss Cameron again for some time.

“I niver been master in a ship afore,” he said : “and I didn’t know what foolish think I mightn’t be a-doin’ when I found mysen’ master of mysen’ ; so I brings Sal out wi’ me this voyage, to keep me steady like, ’cause, ye sees, her very figur’-head’ll be al’ays a-sayin’, ‘For the sake o’ my Sal.’”

“A very wise thing to do, Mr. Willing.”

But Captain Willing had gone off again ;

and, presently, under his directions, the *Queen of the Seas* began slowly to move away from the landing-place.

Sal seemed to be jealous about her father exposing himself so thoroughly as he had just done; forgetting, perhaps, what her father clearly never forgot, that he had already practically exposed himself before Helen Cameron. Captain Willing could speak of his own failing almost as if he were a historical personage. With the passionless impartiality of a true historian he painted himself as a drunkard. He accepted it as a settled fact, known to all the world; and, like a practical man, he saw no use in hiding the fact. His daughter could not reconcile herself to it quite so easily.

“Fayther, he be a good fayther, barrin’ the drink,” she said in a tone of apology: “I can’t tell ye, miss, how kind he be to me, when he’s at home.”

“I saw before, that he seemed very fond of you,” answered Helen: “I believe he took a fancy to me, because I was, as he said, the picture of his Sal.”

“Lawks!” exclaimed Sal. “To think on the likes of that! a-likenin’ the likes of me to a beaut’ful young leddy like yersen’, miss!”

“And so you are happy at home?”

“That I ain’t!”

Sal spoke emphatically, with a warmth, and an appearance of indignation, which seemed to imply that Helen had given utterance to a gross lie. Happy indeed!

“Indeed!” said Helen.

“How ye can think I be happy with sich a creatur’, I can’t make out nohow.”

Again Helen felt bewildered: there seemed to be so much mystery about Sal. Was she talking about her father? Could she call him “sich a creatur’?”

“Why, what’s the matter?” she asked.

“Matter indeed!” exclaimed Sal indignantly: “I should like ye to live wi’ her, and be under her thumb, for a whiles. In coorse ye’d be happy! I b’lieves ye!”

Oh, *her*! That altered the case. But who was this “her”? Sal had not yet mentioned any lady’s name. So Helen asked:

“Whom are you talking of?”

“Why *her*.”

“But who is that ‘her’?”

“Oh, I thought as how fayther had told ye. When mother died, fayther engaged a woman—wife she call *hersen*’—to take keer on me;

and precious keer she *hev'* taken on me—and no mistake! She make me slave and do all the dirty work in the house, while her own brats be brought up like ladies and gentlemen. The last few months, she hev' nearly worreted the life out o' me; and it were to git me out o' her clutches for a whiles as fayther brought me out wi' him this time, I do b'lieve. I should like to pack her and her ugly brats into the hold, and then scuttle the ship. I hates the very sights of her: that I does! What be I to do when I gits home again, miss?"

"I should have thought, Sal, you were strong enough to take care of yourself," said Helen, smiling.

Sal evidently prided herself on her bodily strength. She tossed up her head scornfully, drew herself up to her full height, and answered proudly and defiantly:

"So I be, miss: I could smash her and her brats together into a jelly; and I be obleeged to give her a lickin' every now and then, jist to teach her who I be. But I doesn't like to do it too hoften. 'Cause why? Ye sees, when fayther hear on it, it make him so moloncholy like."

"I'm glad you think of him."

“Oh, miss, if it warn’t for him, I’d hev’ made mincemeat of her and her brats months ago.”

“What do you mean to do then, Sal?”

“Fayther, he tell me to be patient, ’cause, he say, some nice young man’ll come and carry me hoff one o’ these yere days; but I don’t care that for hany young man.”

And Sal tossed up her head again, and snapped her fingers with a good deal of needless energy.

“What would you like to be yourself?”

“Well, miss, I b’lieves I should like a nice sitivation best.”

“But what situation are you fit for? What can you do, Sal?”

“Let me see: what can I do?” said Sal thoughtfully, as if she had never put that question to herself before. “I could knock down nine out o’ ten on all the young men I knows on. I could run a race wi’ the fastest on ’em all. I could skeer away the young gentlemen as was himperent and troublesome.”

Helen smiled, and answered:

“I fear, Sal, these are not the accomplishments that will get you a situation.”

“Happen ye knows on a sweet young leddy,

like yersen', as be in want of a strong young 'oman like mysen'?"

"No, I don't."

"That be a pity, miss. 'Cause why? Ye sees, I taken a fancy to ye, miss; and I could knock down any dirty, stinkin' for'n prince as wanted to be rude to ye. If ye could take me now as a companion, or lady's-maid, or sum'at o' the sort, I b'lieves ye'd niver repent on the bargain. I b'lieves the worst of me is in the rind: I does indeed, miss."

Helen thought for a moment. She too had taken a fancy to Sal in spite of her uncouthness. Sal looked honest and true to the core; and, as far as faithfulness was concerned, Helen might certainly have gone farther and fared worse. True, she scarcely looked handy and deft enough for a lady's-maid; but Helen thought that she would make a most amusing companion. Now that Miss Meldrum was gone, she wanted some one to keep her company; and, in case of any renewal of Boriatsky scenes, Sal would be a priceless treasure. Why not give her a trial? As to the cost, that was nothing. Mr. Cameron never grudged any reasonable cost, where his daughter's wishes were concerned.

They were now quietly sailing down the Humber ; and Captain Willing, being released from immediately pressing duties, had just returned to Helen.

“ I be proud, miss, to hev’ ye as passenger in a ship o’ which I be capt’n,” he said.

“ Sal says she would like to live with me as companion or lady’s-maid,” answered Helen : “ what would you say to it, Mr. Willing ? ”

“ Avast ! ”

Captain Willing was off like a shot. Helen said :

“ What does your father do at home, Sal, for want of a deck to walk on ? ”

“ Well, miss, ye sees, he walk up and down the steers, and back’ards and for’ards in the passage, till she say as how it make her flesh creep on her bones to hear ’un. But I doesn’t b’lieve her, miss. ’Cause why ? She hev’ no flesh to speak on ; being all skin and bone like, as far’s I can see. It be true, I’ve niver seen her in’ards.”

“ You speak very disrespectfully of your stepmother, Sal,” Helen remarked.

“ Oh, miss, it be such fun to see her riled.”

I fear Sal was incorrigible on that point.

Captain Willing here returned, and said :

“Well, miss, if ye’ll undertake to make a leddy on her, I be quite agreeable.”

“I can undertake no such thing, Mr. Willing,” answered Helen promptly: “I don’t know that she has the power of becoming or I of making her one.”

Indeed, it would have been a most Quixotic undertaking.

“That be a pity, miss: ’cause, ye sees, now I be a capt’n, it’ll not be long afore I make my fortin’. I be up to a thousand ways o’ makin’ money, as most young capt’ns knows nothink on. I means to make my Sal a leddy.”

“Well, Mr. Willing, I can only say that I will gladly do my best,” said Helen.

“It be a barg’n, then.”

And off he went.

Frederick Randal had been hovering about Helen all this time, longing to speak to her; but, seeing her busily engaged with Captain Willing and his daughter, he had kept back. Now, however, his stock of patience was exhausted; and he stepped forward in a way which forced Helen to notice him. She held out her hand, and greeted him kindly and heartily.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT CAME OF THE "PURPIS."

"With him went Hope in rank, a handsome maid,
Of cheerful look, and lovely to behold;
In silken samite she was light array'd,
And her fair locks were woven up in gold.
She always smil'd, and in her hand did hold
An holy-water sprinkle dipp'd in dew,
With which she sprinkled favours manifold
On whom she list, and did great liking show,
Great liking unto many, but true love to few."

SPENSER : *The Fairy Queen.*

It might seem strange that (the late) drunken old Joey Willing's being captain of the *Queen of the Seas* should have given Helen Cameron so much joy. And yet it was not strange. She had learnt to trust the old sailor thoroughly. A fallen nature certainly; but one which, even in its ruins, she felt to be essentially noble. His drunken habits had soiled his soul, but had not eaten out the manhood within him. She had a blessed sense of security under his protection. Happily there was no danger whatever on board the *Queen of the Seas*; but, if there had been, she was sure that Joey Willing would have defended her with his life.

She soon ascertained that the "hegg" was indeed hatched, and the "purpis" not only formed but carried out. His purple nose, it is true, still bore witness against him; but it was against his past not his present self. It had taken years to bring it to its state of high finish; and it would take years to tone it down to its normal hue. The sin of years, as embodied in that portentous nose, could not be washed away in a single day. That flaming sign was to proclaim Joey Willing's shame to the world for many a day to come. Moreover, there was still a wateriness in his eyes, and a tremulousness in his limbs, which no keen observer could have mistaken, or failed to ascribe to the right cause.

Otherwise there was a great change in Joey Willing. He looked brighter, and seemed to have greater command over his powers. Helen could see, too, that he was cleanlier in person, and neater in dress. Was it that Sal kept him in better order? Alas! Helen soon found out that Sal did not know how to keep herself clean and neat; and one of the first steps she took, happily with full success, in guiding Sal's problematic march to future ladyhood, was to insist on cleanliness of person and neat-

ness of attire. Helen soon came to the right conclusion: that it was Joey Willing's growing self-respect engendered by his sober habits, aided doubtless by the consciousness of his position as captain of the ship, that had thus far changed his outward appearance.

Moreover, he seemed less restless than he used to be. True, he still indulged in his old peripatetic habit, but not to the same extent as before. When he heard anything which startled him, or taxed his brain more than usual, he would sheer off, as he used to do; but, on the other hand, he would often engage in long conversations, and exchange several broadsides without changing his position once. His muddled brain was evidently clearing up; and he could solve a hard problem in far less time than before. Altogether he gave Helen the impression of a higher nature than she had expected to see in Joey Willing. His march henceforth an upward one? And it was she that had given the first impulse in the new direction.

The following morning she went on deck at five o'clock, meaning, throughout the voyage, to carry on the wholesome habit which she had formed on board the *Boreas*. The morn-

ing was raw and cold; and there was a haze which prevented her from knowing whether they were out of sight of land in the ordinary sense. She could see no one but the helmsman on deck; and she sat down by the side of the ship, and was soon absorbed in thoughts of the past. Presently she was roused out of her reverie by a cheerful voice which said :

“ Good mornin’, miss.”

She looked up, and saw Captain Willing stand before her, his big face beaming with a brightness she had seldom seen in it before.

“ Good morning, Captain Willing,” she answered; “ though I can’t say ‘ fine mornin’ .’ ”

“ It stand to raison as the weather should be dirty this time o’ year : it ’ould be onraisonable to ’spect the fine days as we had aboard the *Boreas*, miss.”

“ But we had some dirty weather too.”

“ Ay, ay, we had our sheer, miss. God A’mighty bothered us, and no mistake.”

“ Bothered ? ”

“ But, bless my heart alive, ye looks blue, miss. Be ye sick ? ”

“ I feel cold.”

Joey Willing darted away. To ponder the

problem in his wandering style? Helen soon found that the problem had already been solved in his quickened brain. He disappeared in the cabin, but soon returned with a warm new rug in his hand, which he threw around Helen, tucking her in deftly and tenderly, and making her feel quite comfortable.

"And how be for'n capt'n?"

The question came so suddenly, that Helen was overwhelmed, and for some moments could not utter a word. Captain Willing gazed on her with silent surprise. Her demeanour presented a really hard problem to his brain. Expressed in his own words: "For'n capt'n not her sweetheart; and she take on so at the thought of 'un! Miss Helen never were the gal to tell a lie." What could it mean? Presently Helen managed to say:

"Oh, Captain Willing, he is dead!"

"Avast!"

And Joey was off again. He walked backwards and forwards quite in the old style, and after several rounds stopped once more before Helen and exclaimed:

"For'n capt'n gone to kingdom come?"

"Yes, Captain Willing," Helen was by this time able to say more calmly.

“Avast!”

“Oh, Captain Willing, I had no idea you would feel it so much. I used to think——”

But Joey had sheered off again. In his old fashion he was pondering the awful problem: For’n capt’n gone to kingdom come! The result of his meditations was embodied in the remark which he made to Helen when he returned.

“He were a fine feller—he were! As fine a feller as hiver I see—for a for’ner. Eh, miss, God A’mighty do hev’ a queer way of choosin’ folks to send to kingdom come.”

To Joey God Almighty had “a queer way” of doing a good many things. The arrangements of Providence were a never-ceasing mystery to him. In the old muddled state of his brain he had not even tried to solve the various problems to which they gave rise: but, since “he came to himself,” he had thought about them a good deal; and, for years to come, the mystery deepened till he learnt in God’s light to see light.

“God is wiser than we,” said Helen, “and knows what is the best for all.”

“Very likely,” answered Captain Willing, gravely nodding his head. “But to think o’

takin' the young, and a-lettin' the ould 'uns rot above ground ! There were Captain Hawk'ns, as were hiver so many years younger nor mysen'. And now for'n cap'n : for'n capt'n gone to kingdom come ! "

" You forget dear Miss Meldrum : she was surely old enough to satisfy your notions of fitness and propriety. "

" Ay, ay. But that 'ere good lady were a-waitin' like for kingdom come. She were a ripe happple—she were ! And she'd ha' dropped o' hersen' one o' these yere days, if she'd ha' been let alone. "

" Yes, she certainly was ripe for glory. Dear Miss Meldrum ! Without making any show, she was a true Christian. My oldest recollections are of her ; and I remember having been struck, when quite a child, with her quiet unostentatious piety. Yes, she has been ripe for many, many years. Dear, dear Miss Meldrum ! How I shall miss her ! "

" And to think as my rotten old carcage should be left ahind, as hev' been worthless to hany one for years and years agone ! " continued Joey, pursuing his own train of thought.

" You must not say such things about yourself, Captain Willing, " answered Helen. " None

but a man capable of great things could have broken off an old habit as you have done ; and I am sure that God has saved you from a watery grave, and awakened your soul, to make a right noble man of you before you die."

"Avast !"

"I have faith in your future, Captain Willing."

Joey must have been greatly excited to betake to his old peripatetic habit so devotedly. It was a long time before he returned, and then it was to say :

"Ye jist say them blessed words hover again, miss."

Helen repeated them, and then added :

"I pray God to help you, Captain Willing."

Joey did not even answer her according to his wont before he took another tour. Helen could see him tramping along, evidently absorbed in thought. So deep a problem had not engaged his brain since the famous temperance egg was hatched. When he returned, he seemed much calmer ; and there was a pathos in his voice when he spoke again. He said :

"Happen God A'mighty 'll larn me to rear

the chicking, as He larnt me to hatch the hegg."

"I am sure He will."

Helen did her best to guide this struggling soul, struggling upward to the light. For the first time in her life she spoke self-prompted of One whom she had learnt to know herself in her own hour of sorrow. But she was dissatisfied with her words, and was wondering what next to say or do, when a happy thought entered her head. She went down to her cabin, brought out a beautifully-bound Bible, wrote a few words in the title-page, and, returning on deck, presented the book open to Captain Willing. With amazement and deep feeling, Joey read on the title-page the following words :

"To Captain Willing, a token of gratitude and respect from Helen Cameron."

"Eh, miss," he cried, his voice trembling with emotion, "those words ought to ha' been used by me ! Geratitute : for what ? Respect : for whom ? A poor drunken old fool as I were afore ye took me in hand like !"

"But all that is over now, you know."

"Ay, ay : well, miss, if ye raylly respects me, I suppose I must respect mysen."

“But will you promise me to read the book, Captain Willing?”

“Ay, ay, as sure’s my name’s Joe Willin’.”

“You’ll not let it be idle in your cabin?”

“No fear of that ’ere, miss.”

“Will you promise to read it regularly, every morning and every night?”

Joey seemed to be troubled. To Helen’s disappointment, he walked off without giving her the promise. But, after a while, he returned and said:

“Well, miss, I ’ouldn’t desave ye, not for nothink in the world. Ye sees, I can’t henter into that ’ere barg’n. ’Cause why? My times ain’t regular like—they ain’t. I be asleep one day of a mornin’, and t’other day of a night. But I’ll tell ye what I’ll do: I’ll promise to read that ’ere book as often as I can. Will that do, miss?”

“That will do.”

“Will ye read me a bit out o’ that ’ere book yersen’, miss, just to give me a taste like of its innards?”

“With great pleasure.”

And by a happy inspiration she hit upon the story of the “woman which was a sinner,” as a specimen of the ways of the One whom she had already spoken of that morning. Helen

was a beautiful reader, giving due force to every word ; and the pathos of the story, as interpreted by her voice, found its way to Joey's heart. He was too deeply moved for words, and walked off. When he returned, he said with the greatest simplicity :

"I had no hidear as there was sich be-youtiful things in that 'ere book."

"It is full of them," answered Helen.

"Will ye mind a-readin' me a bit hivery day, miss?"

"It will give me the greatest pleasure."

And so reading the Bible aloud became an institution on board the *Queen of the Seas*.

Joey took a few turns, and then stopped near Helen, and said abruptly :

"But where's the box of hointment, miss?"

"What do you mean?"

"It's a-coomin', miss ; it's a-coomin'."

And Joey departed. Helen had not the slightest idea what he meant ; and, before she could see him again, Frederick Randal and others came on deck, and prevented her from asking for an explanation. But, months afterwards, she came to understand it, and to understand it in a way which moved her as deeply as she had moved Joey Willing that morning. Ay, the alabaster box "came" at last !

CHAPTER IV.

A FALSE STEP.

“Can you forgive her?”

TROLLOPE: *Can you forgive her?*

LOVE-SICKNESS is no cure for sea-sickness; but sea-sickness is, for the time being, a powerful cure for love-sickness. It interferes considerably with the interesting process of love-making. If the “Library of Useful Knowledge” had contained a work on the pursuit of love under difficulties, some of the most shining examples must have been chosen from the annals of the sea. Where sea-sickness fails to cure love-sickness, even for a moment, there must be something great in the man. The comic side of the affair must not blind us to the serious hardships which the lover has to undergo who resolves to court his mistress in bad weather on board.

I may therefore say that there was something almost heroic in the efforts which Frederick Randal made to win Helen Cameron’s heart. They had a very rough passage; indeed, were beating about the North Sea for many days. The *Queen of the Seas* did not

justify her name : she might have been the slave of the sea. Unhappily, Fred was a bad sailor : more or less sick the whole of the time. And yet his attention to Helen was unremitting ; and, if his gastric organs forced him to quit her side for a moment, as soon as their imperious demands were satisfied he returned to his post. There was something touching as well as laughable in the earnestness with which he divided his attentions between the damsel and the sea. Though Helen herself felt very ill, she would not give way ; would not, like poor Miss Meldrum, resign herself to the sorry comfort of her berth. She went on deck every day, and bravely struggled against the too victorious foe. So Fred had ample opportunity for showing his unselfish devotion ; and he availed himself of it to the utmost, and indeed made himself a martyr for Helen's sake. All honour to Frederick Randal !

There were two or three things which strengthened his chances of success. The reaction in Helen's own mind, against what she deemed the cruelty of her former treatment of him, was very strong. Moreover, she could not but be touched by his self-sacrificing love ; could not but see how bravely he mastered

himself, and his sea-sick craving for rest, in order to wait upon her. But undoubtedly his strongest hold on her was her feeling that he was vastly improved. Before she saw Captain Maleenovsky, she had liked Frederick Randal better than any other young man she knew. At that time, her liking had been curbed by several serious faults in his character. Now those faults seemed to her to have disappeared : as far as she could see, not a trace remained of conceit, ill-temper, or selfishness.

Frederick Randal belonged to that class of characters which shine brightest in the shade of adversity. All characters may be ranged in a scale answering to their power to master their surroundings. The resistance of circumstances is the test of their strength. There are a few, very few in the history of the world, who dwell on high, above the reach of worldly influence ; who are as unruffled by adversity as unspoiled by prosperity ; who by the mere force of their character, as by some wonderful alchemy, turn all outward things into pure gold to add to the wealth within. But by far the larger number of men cannot stand the test at every point: They may be divided into two classes : some whom success cannot spoil,

but whom failure unnerves ; others whom prosperity puffs up, but whom adversity humbles, and by humbling exalts. Frederick Randal belonged to the latter class. It was refreshing to Helen to see him so self-sacrificing, so self-controlled.

Randal, on his part, saw a great change in Helen. He could not account for it. She was so sweet and gentle, so kind and thoughtful, so regardful of his feelings, that he could scarcely recognise the haughty, scornful, sarcastic Helen Cameron of old. She never laughed at him now, never wounded his self-love by sharp or humorous sallies. She was often sad ; but, oh, so gentle and sweet ! What could it all mean ? Was she not in truth beginning to love ? True, she had disclaimed it ; but perhaps, poor girl, she scarcely knew her own mind. Was there not room for hope ? And, whenever his gastric organs allowed him, he did hope for the best. Still he was wise enough not to urge his claims too soon. Day after day he waited on her with unflagging devotion ; and Helen herself began to feel that, in her forlorn helpless state, it was pleasant to have one seemingly so unselfish and so devoted always at hand.

Thus matters went on till toward the end of the voyage. One evening, a day or two before they reached Dantzic, Fred and Helen were sitting on deck, when they heard a scuffle not far off. They both turned to the quarter whence the sound came, and, by the dim fading light, could just see Sal struggling with the second mate. Second mate, a fine young fellow in his way, and, as far as one could judge, very strong. Clear enough, that he was trying to snatch a kiss, and that Sal was trying to prevent him.

“Let me go!” cried Sal; “or I’ll knock ye down, as sure’s my name be Sal Willin’.”

“Ah, I wish you were willing Sal!” answered second mate, laughing at his own small pun.

And he tried to put his arm around her waist. He clearly had no faith in Sal’s pugilistic “gifts.”

“I means what I says,” continued Sal. “Won’t ye give over, ye fool? Here goes then!”

And she doubled her fist and planted a dreadful blow right in the middle of his face. Second mate staggered and fell.

“Come here, Sal,” said Helen.

Sal came up, looking anything but ashamed of her feat. With her face flushed, and her eyes flashing, and her long rich golden hair floating in the breeze, she looked almost beautiful at that moment in the twilight, and perhaps justified her father in christening Helen the "pictur' o' my Sal." She tossed back her head in her own peculiar way, and said in a tone of defiance :

"Here I be, miss ; what d'ye want wi' me ? The himperence o' the feller !"

Helen, with a backward glance at Prince Boriatinsky's treatment of herself in those very seas, could not help thinking that it was a fine thing for a woman to have Sal's bodily strength, and that Sal was scarcely unjustified in her present use of it. Still, pained by the indelicacy of the whole affair, and remembering her promise to Captain Willing, she said gravely :

"I was sorry to see you do that, Sal."

"Sarved him right !" exclaimed Sal scornfully. "The nasty dirty crittur' ! What business had he a-kissin' on me ? I'd hev' 'em all know as I'll sarve 'em the same trick, one after t'other, if they tries to come over me wi' that 'ere nonsense. Let 'em come on : I be a match for 'em all."

"But you forget, Sal, that your father wants to make a lady of you," urged Helen.

"I doesn't want to be a leddy!" exclaimed Sal emphatically: "if bein' a leddy means bein' a poor tame crittur' as don't dare for the life of her to purtect hersen', I doesn't want to be a leddy! I should like to know why the young men should have their own way in iverything, so long as a gal hev' a pair of fists to keep 'em off."

"I don't blame you for protecting yourself; but you might do it in a more ladylike way."

"I s'pose ye wants me to use more soft soap," answered Sal scornfully: "but I got none in mysen', miss; and, what's more, I doesn't know where to git it."

Frederick Randal, who prided himself on having all the accomplishments of a "gentleman" (according to the lights of the age), knew something about boxing, and had often been in the ring. He could not help admiring the skill with which Sal had planted her blow. So he asked her:

"Who taught you to fight?"

"Fayther: he be a crack hand himsen'; and he began to teach me when I were a babby."

"You are very strong," said Fred admiringly, looking at her stalwart arms.

"Rayther!" answered Sal sarcastically; "and I be a-thinkin' ye be a green 'un not to hev' found it out afore, young man. If miss yere iver need purtection, here be a pair o' fists at her sarvice."

"Is it because you are so big?"

"I b'lieves ye! P'raps. They calls me 'our great Sal' at our chapel, they does!"

"Which chapel is that?" asked Helen, wondering whether it were that to which she had gone with Mr. Cameron's family."

"I goes to the Hindependent Chapel," answered Sal; "and I sits and sings in the gallery with the choir. One day the choir sings a tune which repeat the first three syllabubs of one of the lines thrice over. Well, one of them lines begin with: 'Our great Salvation.' So, ye sees, we had to sing, 'Our great Sal' thrice over. Well, first time we sings it, it sound just queer like; and I were tickled at it. But, second time, they seems to be tickled theirsens; and all on 'em looks at me, as much as to say, 'Ye knows ye be "our great Sal," doesn't ye?' But, third time they sings it, the whole congregation looked tickled like;

and I hears the singers sniggling and tittering about me, ready to bust. I ver sin' that they calls me 'Our great Sal.' But the minister, he niver giv' out that hymn again, not as I knows on."

And Sal stalked away in triumph. A doubtful experiment, that of trying to make a lady of her !

After she had left them, Frederick Randal and Helen Cameron remained silent for a long time.

"Why are you always so sad nowadays, Helen?" Randal asked at length.

"Don't ask me, Fred: I don't feel strong enough even to think of it; far less to talk of it."

"What, has that vill—that Maleenovskiy been using you badly?"

For one moment there was fear of a stormy outburst on the part of Helen; and then Randal would have caught it! But it was gone in a moment. The tears were in her eyes; but she was quite calm. That subject no battlefield of stormy passions, but a home of calm and holy memories. She said quietly:

"Hush, Fred!"

"I heard something about it at Petersburg. He has been jilting you, has he not?"

"Hush, Fred! He is gone!"

"Where?"

“God has called him home!”

It was long before Helen could bring herself to speak thus of Captain Maleenovsky's death. Killed in a duel; suddenly cut off with the guilt of attempted murder on his soul: was that the way *home*? But she *had* learnt to use such language.

“Do forgive me, Helen, dear!” cried Randal, in real sorrow: “I had no idea of such a thing. I am grieved that I should have spoken so. Tell me you forgive me.”

“Oh, yes, dear Fred; I hope I have learnt to judge more charitably of others than I used to do. Everything seems changed now. I have suffered too much myself to be severe on others.”

Randal was really sorry on Helen's account; and yet I fear he was somewhat glad on his own. He was not a bad fellow at heart; but he could not help rejoicing that the only barrier between him and Helen Cameron was removed. Still he looked back with shame on that scene in Mr. Cameron's house which had severed him from Helen. The thought of him who was gone brought it vividly back to his memory. He was too honest and straightforward not to acknowledge the wrong. So he spoke out.

“Oh, Helen, dear, it seems so dreadful to think of now : that, the last time I saw him, the interview should have been such an unfortunate one. I feel now that I behaved shamefully then ; that I deserved all you told me, hard as it was. I only regret that I never apologised to him.”

“Ah, Fred, you never knew him.”

There was a long and painful silence. Randal never knew how much he had raised himself in Helen's eyes by his frank acknowledgment. He was overflowing with love, but did not know how to bring it out. At length he said :

“Oh, Helen, dear, if you will only let me do my best to comfort you, I am sure you yourself will be the happier for it. All I can do is poor at the best ; but such as it is, I long to devote it to your service. Do not deny me this joy.”

“Hush, Fred !”

But Fred was too far gone to be checked.

“It isn't as if I were a stranger, you know, Helen. I have known you and loved you from childhood. For years and years the one great joy of my life has been the hope of calling you my own.”

“No more, pray !”

But Randal was too full of joyful hope to check himself.

“My whole heart and my whole life will be yours ; wholly, unreservedly, eternally yours.”

“I can’t bear it, Fred !”

“Oh, Helen, turn me not away after so many years of faithful love. Have pity on me !”

“Have pity on me, Fred !”

He seized her hand : she did not snatch it away. What was she thinking of ? Was she going to yield ? Well, pity her ; and make allowance for the state she was in. Very weak, poor thing ; weak in body as well as in mind : weary and broken down ; sea-sickness making the smallest effort a burden and a cross. What she wanted was to be let alone ; and, not being let alone, she had scarcely the strength left to resist.

Besides, she had of late fallen into a way of thinking of God’s arrangements in the world, which chimed in with her weakness, and fostered it. The Reverend Ebenezer Birkenshaw, in his preaching, had always laid much stress on what he called “the leadings of Providence.” Helen had not been much moved by the thought at the time ; but, when, in the hour of her

sorrow, it came back to her, strengthened by the authority of Mrs. Beresford, it had struck her a good deal. A wrong thought, as it is often cherished; but with a foundation of eternal truth to rest upon. We are not to shut our ears to the voice of God speaking to us through everything around us. But we are not to trust ourselves blindly to the guidance of events. Let us do the right, whatever events may be; guide our steps, not by fanciful interpretations of God's "Providence," but by the unerring decisions of God's law. When we halt, and wait for "leadings of Providence," how easy for the devil to lead us astray by placing a mirage, a caricature of "Providence," before our eyes!

So I think it was with Helen at this time. Had she not a glimpse of "the leadings of Providence" in the events which had taken place, and were taking place, around her? What was the death of Captain Maleenovsky but a barrier which "Providence" had put in her way, as she was walking in one direction? What was the reappearance of Frederiek Randal, with his offer, but the voice of that same "Providence," saying: "This is the way—walk thou in it?" Could she not see a Divine

hand "hedging her way about," as Mr. Birkenshaw used to say? Her destiny was taken out of her own hands: she had nothing to do but to follow the guidance of events. I say this, not to defend her, but simply to account for her weakness. The most noteworthy thing about it was, that she shrank from the path to which "Providence" seemed to point her. We often say of a certain course, "This is the hand of Providence," merely because it chimes in with our wishes. It was not so with Helen. As far as her weakness and her utter weariness would allow her, she struggled against it, and "kicked against the pricks," as she acknowledged with shame. But, the more she struggled, the more she was assured that it was the path of duty. She was in that state of mind which sees a duty all the more clearly because it involves self-sacrifice.

And so she yielded to Frederick Randal at last. A butterfly? Was she not still a grub? By no means. Not a grub, grovelling in the dust, but a butterfly, just fledged, trying its weak unsteady wings for the first time, and tumbling to the ground. If we could only learn this truth: that a grub, crawling on the ground, cannot well fall; whereas a weak butterfly, soaring in the air, *may*!

CHAPTER V.

A FALSE POSITION.

“Such wayward ways hath love, that most part in discord
Our wills do stand, whereby our hearts but seldom do accord.”

SURREY: *Poems.*

It was some time before Helen fully realised the step which she had taken. She tried to retrace it; but, sick and weary as she was, she could scarcely summon strength for the struggle. Frederick Randal held her to her promise; and, by the time they reached Dantzie, it was understood that they were betrothed. Fred was so elated by his success, that from Dantzie he wrote letters to all his friends in England announcing his engagement. To those at Petersburg he wrote nothing, but was in high glee at the surprise he meant to give them. There seemed to be only one loop-hole of escape for Helen: it was all along understood that her father's hearty consent was needed to ratify the engagement. Well, when Mr. Cameron heard of it, he pulled about the longest face that Helen had ever seen him make; but, as he had really nothing to object to in Frederick Randal or his family, he

magnanimously declared that he gave his hearty consent to Helen's choice.

And, for some time, Helen had rest : happiness she could scarcely look for as yet ; but, after the dreadful storms of the past, it seemed to her as if she had reached a haven at last. Feeling that she had followed "the leadings of Providence," she did her best to accommodate herself to the new career before her. It was something, it was much, to have the love of a true man, even though he were not the greatest and the best that God had revealed to her. And Fred did love her truly : she was sure of that ; as sure as she was of anything. Though his love was not without alloy ; though there still was a good deal of selfishness mixed up with it ;—yet, at all events, it was genuine, as far as it went. He was very kind and very devoted. He loaded her with costly gifts. That was not much : no fear of Helen's rating them beyond their worth. But, at any rate, they were tokens of real love ; and, as such, she prized them.

If Randal had been wise, there would not have been many jars between them : for Helen was so subdued ; so anxious to please him as far as she honestly could ; so thoughtful not to wound his self-love by her raillery, as she used

to do ;—that he often wondered at the change in her. But he was not wise. The cold shade of adversity had stunted his faults without uprooting them ; and, in the warm sunshine of prosperity, they sprouted up again. Moreover, one of his faults shot up to an alarming height : he soon showed that he was very jealous. He was so vain, or, at least, so proud of Helen, that he was always urging her to “ go out ; ” that is, to show her beauty to the world, and cover him with the glory which belonged to the owner of such peerless beauty : and, yet, when she complied with his wish, and, as a natural consequence, awakened admiration wherever she went, he was sore and jealous. But Helen bore it all beautifully, and, in short, seemed to be in a fair way to become a model wife. How a girl of her strong character could submit to all this, was a wonder ; but, at this period of her history, to see a duty was for her to do it. She had a high (mistaken) ideal before her : she would atone for the past ; would “ follow the leadings of Providence ; ” in spite of all difficulties, would make “ a model wife.”

Her greatest comfort at this time was—Sal. Indeed, the big bony girl proved a perfect

godsend. Whenever Helen was dull and low, as she often was, Sal would rally her with her racy talk. Helen did not make much way in the interesting task of turning the sailor's daughter into a lady: and she soon began to think that Dame Nature had not bestowed on Sal the qualifications which go to make a lady; indeed, that it would be a pity to spoil so racy an original by daubing it over with a coating of varnish. Sal's mother-wit and free undaunted spirit were much finer things than any ladyhood she could have acquired. Mr. Cameron had at first been somewhat shocked by her coarseness; but, seeing how much she amused Helen, and being still anxious about his daughter, he had fallen in with her arrangements. Helen tried to read with Sal, and cultivate her taste; and never failed to be amused by the free comments which she made on everything she saw and heard.

One evening, a few days after their arrival at St. Petersburg, they were sitting together in the breakfast-room, which continued to be Helen's favourite resort. They had just returned from a long drive, in the course of which Helen had shown Sal some of the chief sights in the city.

“Well, Sal, and how do you like St. Petersburg now?” Helen asked.

“Well, miss, I can’t say as I likes it at all,” was Sal’s frank and emphatic answer: “the people looks skeered like.”

“But don’t you think it is a grand city?”

“That be as may be, miss. But there be a cranky look about it all; it be what I calls a jimerack affair. And I should like to know, miss, what be the use of sich-like grandness when the people daresn’t call their lives their own.”

“Not ‘sich-like grandness,’ but ‘such grandeur,’ Sal.”

“Sich grandeur.”

Sal spoke with a good deal of meekness for her.

“*Such*, Sal.”

“Such grandeur. I be sure I shall never larn to say them new-fangled words.”

“Not ‘them,’ but ‘*those* words.’”

“Those words.”

“Remember, Sal: ‘them’ is a personal pronoun, and can’t be used to qualify a noun.”

“Well, miss, I niver found it parsonal mysen.’ I tell ye who *be* parsonal, and no mistake. That be Mr. Randal: he make

too many parsonal remarks to ye, to suit my taste. How ye can a-bear it, miss, I can't make out nohow : I'd hev' turned 'un off neck and crop long ago; ay, and given 'un a jolly good hidin' into the bargain—that I 'ould, miss."

"Hush, Sal: you mustn't speak like that of Mr. Randal. And what do you think of Peter the Great's monument?" she asked, to give a turn to the talk.

"Them sarpents as is a-hissin'——"

"Oh Sal, Sal, when will you learn grammar?"

"Niver, I b'lieves, miss."

"In one sentence of half a dozen words you have managed to make about as many mistakes. Instead of saying 'them sarpents as is a-hissin',' you should say: 'those serpents which are hissing.'"

"Bother your gram-mother, or sum'at!" exclaimed Sal impatiently: "it ain't half as nat'ral like."

"But what do you think of the monument?"

"I shouldn't like to be the rider o' that 'ere hoss; why, the next leap 'll land 'un into no-where!"

Sal's untrained mother-wit had landed her on the same conclusion as his cultivated taste does the art-critic. The conception of the monument is undoubtedly grand: but, with all that, there is something absurd in a horse galloping on the edge of a small rock; threatening, the next moment, to plunge into the abyss. One can only hope that it does not foreshadow the fate of Peter the Great's policy.

"What do you think of the people themselves, Sal?" asked Helen.

"I think they be the dirtiest, hugliest, stinkin'est beasts as I iver set heyes on!" answered Sal emphatically: "I used to think as Bridget Mulligan were the hugliest crittur I'd iver seen; but them Roossian women beats her into shivers."

"Perhaps you like the men better."

"I b'lieves ye! Six o' one and half dozen o' t'other. I 'ouldn't hev' a dirty stinkin' Rooshan for a mate; no, not if there was ne'er another man kickin' in the world. I 'ould as lieve be spliced to a monkey."

"Perhaps you'll change your mind when you know more of them."

"Of which on 'em? The monkeys? P'raps I shall, miss."

“You are a queer girl, Sal.”

At this moment, Natalia, the housemaid, entered the room with a packet in her hand.

“Now that be what I calls a dacent gal for a Rooshan,” said Sal, pointing to Natalia with no great delicacy: “if all was the likes of her, they’d do, miss.”

Natalia presented the packet, saying:

“With her highness’s compliments.”

Her highness’s compliments! Who was her highness? Helen could not think of any highness that she knew—barring Prince Boriatinsky. Princess Boriatinska—ch? While she was opening the packet, and musing upon its contents, Sal said to Natalia:

“Come here, Natty.”

“Natty,” Sal’s English diminutive for Natalia. Having lived some years in Mr. Cameron’s household, Natty had picked up a good many English words. So, going up to Sal, she said:

“Vot barishnia vont?”

It had taken a good deal to make Natalia stomach the word barishnia (young lady) as applied to a nondescript animal like Sal. The Russian girl had never ceased to wonder at the English. Sal did not square with Natty’s

theory of the world. According to Natty, mankind were divided into two classes: the higher and the lower; ladies and women, gentlemen and men. She never could tell to which of these classes Sal rightly belonged. She was not exactly a lady; and yet *the* barishnia insisted on her being treated as such. Natty thought she must have sprung from some mongrel race; but the very thought of such a breed jarred with her "theory of the universe."

"Natty, ye be what I calls a natty girl," said Sal.

"Me no onderstand."

"Ye can't make me out? Well, how could she, poor hignorant Rooshan gal as she be?"

"Me onderstand ze ozzer barishnia," said Natalia; "but you speak *varvarsko*."

It was Sal's turn not to understand: how could she, poor hignorant English gal that she was?

"Ye speak such outlandish jaw," she said: "I wish ye could speak plain Hinglish, Natty. But I s'pose I ought to try and larn your barbarous language."

Of course she did not know that Natalia had just said that she, Sal, spoke barbarously.

"You no lern," said Natalia: "ze ozzer barishnia lern."

"What d'ye call the hand in Russ?" asked Sal, holding out her doubled fist.

"*Rooka.*"

"I s'pose that 'ere has sum'at to do with *Roosha*; though the Rooshans bean't *handy*, by no means, nor *handsome* neither."

"You handy; you beeg hand."

"And what d'ye call the nose?"

"*Nos.*"

"Why, I b'lieve that 'ere is our nose cut short!" exclaimed Sal. "And what may a cheer be?"

"Me no onderstand."

Sal pointed to a chair and repeated:

"A cheer!"

"Oh, zat *Stool.*"

"Why that 'ere be a little cheer wi' the back cut off. And what d'ye call a sofa?"

"*Sofa.*"

"Why, I declares ye hev' cribb'd yer barbarous tongue from ours, and spoilt it into the bargain. I see Miss Cameron is disengaged now: ye may make yoursen' skeerce, Natty."

"Me make vot?"

“Make yersen’ skeerce,” repeated Sal slowly; “make yer room stand for yer company.”

“Me room on ze top,” said Natalia gravely; “ve all zere ven ze beeg vater com.”

“Make yersen’ room in the bottom, then,” said Sal, laughing; “in the kitchen, or anywheeres but yere.”

“The barishnia means that you may go now, Natalia,” said Helen in Russ.

“Why doesn’t she say so, then?” muttered Natalia, as she went out.

In the meanwhile Helen had opened the packet. It contained an invitation from Anna, Princess Donskaya, to a ball, which, it was hinted, would be graced by the presence of the Grand Duke Nicholas. It was very strange: the princess had never taken any notice of Helen since the ball which she had been at nearly two years before. Perhaps our friend Lieutenant Alexeyev, aide-de-camp to the Grand Duke, could have told her something about it. At any rate, he knew how to make her highness believe (without telling a lie) that Imperial Highness would be gratified by the sight of a peerless beauty like Helen Cameron at the ball. It was jealousy of that very beauty that had made her resolve never

to invite Helen again ; but, as she had made up her mind to " fascinate " Imperial Highness, she durst not begin by displeasing him.

Helen read the " invitation " aloud, and expressed her surprise at receiving it, giving Sal a brief account of what had taken place nearly two years before. Sal said :

" You'll go in coorse ? "

" That I won't. "

" Well, I should like oncommon to go my-sen', miss, " said Sal.

Helen was tickled at the thought of the unwieldy hoyden appearing in a nobleman's ball-room. The idea of a bull in a china-shop was not more laughable.

" What would you do ? " she asked.

" I 'ould look about me, miss, and see what them critturs looks like, and how they haacts. "

" I'm afraid you'd knock some of them down before it was over, " said Helen, laughing.

" No, miss, " answered Sal magnanimously ; " if they behaves theirsens, they 'ould come to no grief by me. "

" Well, I expect it will be a long time before you get an invitation to Princess Donskaya's ball. "

“ I were a-thinkin’, miss, if ye rayly means not to go, ye might jist as well give *me* yer invite. Ye says the princess ain’t seen ye not nigh two year, and then honly oncet ; and, as ye be the pictur’ o’ me, no one needn’t know that I ain’t Miss Helen Cameron.”

Helen laughed heartily at the idea.

“ I fear it wouldn’t do,” she said at length : “ there may be some there that remember me, even if the Princess doesn’t. One way or another, the imposture is sure to be detected ; and just think, Sal, what a scrape you would be in then ! Why, they’ll pelt you to death with hard words.”

“ Hard words break no bones,” answered Sal bravely. “ If so be the critturs finds it out, I can git out—can’t I ? And if so be they jaws me, I can jaw them—can’t I ? And if so be the worst coom to the worst, I hev’ a pair of fists as’ll make me a match for the best on ’em.”

The conversation was stopped by the entrance of Frederick Randal. As soon as the usual endearments had passed between them, she showed him the “ invitation.” Randal said what Sal had said before him :

“ You’ll go, of course ? ”

"Why 'of course,' Fred?"

"It is such a capital introduction to St. Petersburg society."

"I don't care about it."

"You'll have to care, you know."

"Why?"

"I'd go, if I were you, Helen."

"I'd rather not."

"Of course, I don't wish to force you; but it would please me, dear Helen, if you went."

No doubt of it. By hook or by crook he'd get an invitation himself; and then he would be known to the Grand Duke, and to the whole fashionable world of Petersburg, as the owner of such a beauty. But what about your jealousy, Master Fred?

"I don't feel well enough to go, dear Fred," Helen said.

Fred looked vexed.

"All I can say is, that, if you love me, and really wish to please me, you'll go," he answered.

It was scarcely wise to harp on that string; it was not over stout or strong, and might easily snap. The tie which bound him to Helen was not the Gordian knot of wedlock yet, and might be unloosed.

But, remembering by-gones, it was beautiful to see how Helen met the appeal. She had wronged him once ; and, as an atonement for the wrong, she meant to be very forbearing now. A disclaimer of love, which rose to her lips, she suppressed ; and even a milder and more humorous retort, which suggested itself, she would not utter. Still she did not feel bound blindly to bow her will to his. In the olden times she would have flouted his claims, and laughed them to scorn ; but now she merely remonstrated with him as gently as she could. Sweetly smiling, she said :

“Really, dear Fred, I think you are unreasonable. If you could bring forward some sound reason, I would give up my own comfort for your sake ; but, when you cannot give me any reason at all, it is too much to expect that, in my present state of health, I should sacrifice myself for nothing.”

Randal was clearly becoming angry.

“It ought to be reason enough to you that I wish it,” he answered.

At this moment Mr. Cameron entered the room. He folded his daughter warmly to his heart. Helen, since her return from England, had clung to her father more than she had ever

done before. Perhaps Mrs. Beresford's words had had weight. Perhaps her troubles and sorrows drove her to her natural guardian. Perhaps, too, the thought of parting from him made her feel more tenderly toward him.

Mr. Cameron shook hands heartily with Fred; and both Fred and Helen appealed to Mr. Cameron. Did any of them think of the time when Mr. Cameron had appealed to Fred against Helen? How times were changed since then! Mr. Cameron looked very grave, and, after some reflection, said that he did not see that Helen was bound to go to the ball against her will.

Fred soon after took his leave, looking vexed; and Mr. Cameron, when left alone with his daughter, earnestly advised her to give way.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER BALL.

“Come and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe ;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet liberty.”

MILTON: *L' Allegro*.

FRED returned in the morning, doing his best to look sad, succeeding so far as to look sulky: brows knit; corners of mouth drawn down camel-like, and, like the camel, appealing to the sense of mirth as well as of pity. He said very little; had exhausted his ammunition the night before. But all he said was in the tone of a martyr: meekly bowing to the unrighteous will of his persecutors, since there was no help for it; but keeping his right of entering a silent protest against their wicked doings, and clearly foreshadowing the likelihood of that silent, sullen protest lasting many weary, stormy days. A position nearly impregnable: assailable neither by siege nor by storm; at the best, promising endless battles and strife.

Helen was sorely tempted to rout him out of

his martyr-like attitude by raillery ; for Fred had, with wonderful simplicity, laid himself charmingly open to the lighter shafts of ridicule. But she did not carry out her wishes : checked by her nobler and more generous feelings. Frederick Randal was soon put out of his pain by the announcement that Helen had made up her mind to go to the ball. In the twinkling of an eye, the sullen martyr was turned into the radiant conqueror.

Fred left no stone unturned to get an "invitation" to the ball. For the next day or two, the quest formed the serious business of his life ; and he set about it with an energy and a dogged perseverance which, if turned to the work of self-culture, might have made a man of him. Happily his father, as the richest English merchant at St. Petersburg, had a good deal of influence. It was strained to the utmost to get a piece of pasteboard : and, on the second day, Frederick Randal's gigantic efforts were crowned with success. Joy of joys ! The all-powerful card, the passport which was to open the gates of (his) paradise to him, lay in his hand. He handled it with rapture. Armed with that (metaphorical) crowbar, he wrenched open the door of Prince Donskoy's palace,

Helen leaning on his arm the while, and joined "the festive throng."

Anna, Princess Donskaya, was in all her glory. With one exception, all the greatest beauties of the Russian Court were at the ball : but, as all but the ladies acknowledged, she outshone them all ; *facile princeps*. The superb way in which the country girl of three years since presided over that gathering of imperial dukes and duchesses, highnesses of all sorts and sizes, ambassadors and ministers of state ! And then the way in which she behaved to the Grand Duke Nicholas ! The meekness and reverence expressed in so lofty a tone ! He was her Emperor's brother, and might one day himself become her Sovereign ; but, on the other hand, she was his hostess, and, as such, the first and foremost, the ruler in that assembly. The way in which she managed to blend both functions, and to bring out a harmonious whole out of the two, was worth coming a long way to see, simply as a study of character.

There was only one thing which threatened to ruffle her mind, and throw her off her balance. That was the presence of Helen Cameron. She had almost forgotten what Helen was like, and was scarcely prepared for the sight she saw.

She was far too clear-sighted not to see that Helen outshone herself; and, if she had made such a mistake, the sensation which Helen made would have disabused her. Envy, jealousy, rage, swelled her bosom. If she had given full swing to her feelings, she must have betrayed herself. But all her powers were under wonderful control. Not for one moment did she forget where she was, and what eyes were upon her. She received Helen graciously: with lofty condescension and courtesy, such as a prime minister might assume towards a clerk in his office. Of course Helen had a right to be there, as one of the invited; but, as to any thing beyond the courtesy due from a great princess to the daughter of a plain *bourgeois*, the Donskaya was innocent of it.

It is simply out of my power to overrate the impression which Helen herself made. Few of that titled company had ever seen her like. The sight of her was a new sensation to the pleasure-sated men who thronged those halls. The freshness of her beauty perhaps struck them more than the peerless nature of the beauty itself. There are old men living now, who look back with lingering fondness to that evening, so many years ago, when the dazzling

sight suddenly burst upon them, like the moon from behind a cloud. They crowded round her, and feasted their eyes. They seemed to take possession of her. Poor Fred was at once jostled aside, and found it as hard to come within speaking distance of her, as to gain an entrance to the Emperor's private cabinet. Those high-born men and women simply ignored his existence. As to Helen, her beauty levelled the barrier between them. But he: what business had he there at all?

Poor Fred! It was gall and bitterness to him. If ever poetical justice were done in a ball-room, it was done that night. He had hoped to become known and envied as the owner of that beauty; and I should think there was not one there who dreamt that the belle of the evening was betrothed to that commonplace looking young Englishman. Well for him, perhaps, that they didn't know it! He could see the greatest and the handsomest men of the day thronging round his betrothed, taking possession of her, vying with each other to win a smile from those sweet lips; and he could not even enter the magic circle! He was sore, jealous, angry, desperate. With throbbing brow and aching heart he followed her about;

hovering as near as he could round the spot where at the moment she happened to be, and every moment fancying more and more painfully that she encouraged the homage which she received. It was more than flesh and blood could bear: and he rushed distracted out of the room; anywhere, out of sight of her and her villainous admirers! "Sarved him right!" Sal said, when she afterward heard of it.

The first dance was led off by the Grand Duke Nicholas and Princess Donskaya. Lieutenant Alexeyev had been fortunate enough to see Helen as soon as she entered the ballroom, and to secure her hand for this dance. In Russia the first dance at a ball is always the *Polonaise*: absurdest of dances; strictly speaking, not a dance at all, but a melancholy owl-like procession through the house. Helen made a remark upon it to her partner. He answered at once, in his easy *nonchalant* style, and in a low tone, almost a whisper:

"Yes, looks like a solemn procession of donkeys, treading on one another's heels. Extremely interesting, though: an endless show of—Backs! Presently grow familiar with highness's back, in front. Not the best opportunity for studying character, you'll say. Beg

pardon: highness's character read as readily in her back as in her face. Indeed, far more easily: highness's face blank; but expression in her back. Character in every part of body: in back as well as in front; in little toe as well as in eloquent eye. Take our esteemed friend, Mademoiselle Randal, *par example*: I, for one, reverence her back. Straightness and stiffness in that back highly suggestive: suggestive of a strong, straight, upright soul."

"At any rate, it is in her soul, if it is not in her back," said Helen warmly.

She was laughing: she could not help being amused by Lieutenant Alexeyev's bantering chatter.

"In her back too," he replied. "Now contrast it with highly respectable back before us. Curves in *this* back: a sinuosity, a serpent-like flexibility; suggestive of—something different. Wouldn't see it in her face, unless caught by surprise; back far more eloquent exponent of character than face. Back such an honest creature: defy any one, cleverest masker of face, to hide expression in back. The dorsal science for me! Truest physiognomy! I reverence the back."

"You seem to have studied it profoundly."

And Helen laughed again.

“A little: only enough to trace general outlines; not enough to read minuter shades of character. Accomplished physiognomist would find them there, of course. My profoundest observations made in the *Polonaise*: therefore long live the *Polonaise*; giving such interesting opportunities for study of character! In the next *Polonaise* I dance, may mademoiselle be my immediate predecessor! Long to study your character: a piquancy about it; sure to come out in shining lines on back.”

“I always thought my face was open enough.”

“Back more expressive. And so mademoiselle been to England? Attended many balls there? Often danced the *Polonaise*?”

“It is scarcely known in England.”

“Barbarians! What national loss! What loss to philosophy and knowledge of human nature!”

“I did not attend any ball in England,” continued Helen: “I was very ill the greater part of the time; and I daresay you are not aware that I was there in the summer.”

“Had heard, but forgot. Ah, that voyage:

that divine voyage! Envy that voyage of all other things. Finest opportunity for studying character, back and front! And the situation! Falls to the lot of few mortals. Mademoiselle between Highness Prince Boriatinsky and Honour Captain Maleenovsky! Beauty affronted by Highness: Highness confronted by Honour. Highness impertinent: Beauty indignant. Highness warm: Honour cool. Highness will fight: Honour won't. Highness furious: Honour triumphant."

"That will do!"

Helen did not relish this bantering *réchauffé* of her own sufferings. So thoroughly out of taste!

"And, oh, that shipwreck!" continued Alexeyev: "that immortal shipwreck! That unspeakable ducking in company with the gods (of the sea) and the little fishes!"

Helen was disgusted: wondering how he could speak so lightly of one who had been his friend. She felt something like contempt toward the gay and frivolous chatterer beside her.

"It was not so pleasant for me to feel as it seems for you to describe," she said warmly, almost indignantly. "Pray, say no more about it: it is a painful subject to me."

“Can understand mademoiselle’s reluctance to proceed to the catastrophe; but necessary to complete the picture. Highly unsatisfactory result! Honour bound to pink Highness: Highness pinking Honour; neatly running him through the body! Ugh! An ugly wound! Interesting case for surgeons! Valuable contribution to science!”

Helen lost all her patience. She had not looked for the sorrow of a David over a Jonathan; though in this age we have had an illustrious example of love between man and man “passing the love of woman,” and sorrow rising into song through many weary years beyond the grave. But she was not prepared to see the death of a friend turned into a jest.

“For shame!” she cried warmly: “your brains have all turned to tongue.”

“Capital!” he said, unabashed. “Must use that image: just fit a young fellow I know.”

“If you speak in that way any more, I will turn my back upon you,” said Helen.

Of course she spoke figuratively; but it suited Alexeyev’s purpose to understand her literally. He answered promptly:

“Do me the favour? Just what I want: long to study mademoiselle’s back.”

By this time the *Polonaise* was over; and the gentlemen crowded round her in unpleasant fashion. To escape their importunities she walked forward. But, in seeking to avoid Charybdis, she fell plump into the bosom of Scylla (*Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim*), which stood yawning before her in the shape of—Prince Boriatinsky! Literally yawning: highness *ennuyé*; tired of the old round of beauties he had met for months. He had not seen Helen; and, if she had not been so eager to escape Charybdis, she need not have fallen into Scylla.

Highness looked superb; as superb as tailor, dentist, and hairdresser, could make him. Uniform undoubtedly the most gorgeous in that room: glittering with gold and precious stones. Head, a triumph of genius (outside, not inside): if the artist who achieved it had stipulated to affix his name on a card, like a placard, to the hair which rose ever so high up from highness's brazen brow, he might not only have made his fortune (which very likely he did), but "transmitted his name to posterity." But a fourth artist must have been laid under contribution to complete that finished work of art—Prince Boriatinsky; for the cheeks, which

the dentist had stretched out, and made to look so full and free from creases, were as delicately pink as those of a young man of twenty. How many in that room knew that Prince Boriatinsky was a work of art, and not a production of nature? Few beside Helen, I think. And so he moved amidst that titled throng, envied by many, and admired by most: a lay-figure, so exquisitely fashioned, that they took him to be a genuine handsome man.

As soon as he saw Helen, he took possession of her. He was so mighty a prince that all the rest retired, and left her to his tender mercies. Helen shrank from him with unspeakable horror: HIS MURDERER! But what to do? Just think of creating a scene in the Donskaya's house; in the presence too of the Imperial Grand Duke and Duchess! But Helen had that within, before which all the laws of etiquette are scattered like chaff before the wind. Perish all the laws of etiquette rather than that she should seem to sanction *his* murderer! She was so much upset that she could not even use the weapons of raillery which she had found so powerful of old.

“Leave me alone!” she said sharply.

“Ah, you are cruel!”

Helen tried to pass on ; but Prince Boriatsky kept her back.

“Let me go, I tell you !” cried Helen still more sharply ; “or I’ll do you some mischief.”

The prince laughed her threat to scorn ; but, the next moment, he had to rue his rashness. Helen had pulled off his glossy hair : the triumph of art lay on the floor ; and highness stood with his bald shining pate rising bare and clear out of the mass of man-millinery beneath. The figure that he cut ! The contrast between the old bald head above and the young (padded) figure beneath ! A roar throughout the room. The cheat unmasked ; the lay-figure exposed ! In the nature of things it would be years before society took it for a man again.

Highness looked stunned : some time before he could fully realise the calamity. It amounted to ostracism ; for how could he hold up his (bald) head again in that fashionable company ?

The triumph of art had fallen at the feet of the Grand Duke Nicholas, who dearly loved a practical joke. He picked it up tenderly, and restored it to its owner.

"Sweets to the sweet," said a voice from behind in English.

It was never known to whom that voice belonged. As the number of English scholars was limited, there were few candidates for the honour. But there was a fierce dispute about their rival claims. The great question was never settled; and it remains an open question still, and doubtless will for ever.

Prince Boriatinsky meekly received the precious work of art; and, as it was unhappily out of his power to adjust it on his head (it needed an artist to do that), he slunk away with the triumph in his hand. The roars which followed his retirement!

Helen, as soon as she had done the deed, burst into tears, and sank into a chair. She felt ashamed. Of course, she had become the observed of all observers. Every one was discussing the case. Indeed, another great controversy sprang up. There were the Helenic and the Anti-Helenic party: the former made up chiefly of young gentlemen, and the latter of young ladies. Helenic party maintained that Mademoiselle Cameron was justified in inflicting the fearful punishment on highness: Anti-Helenic party proclaimed that it was

vulgar, unladylike, and frightfully severe ; that no amount of wrong could have justified it in any case ; but that, in this case, it was doubly unwarrantable, inasmuch as the assailant was a low plebeian, and the assailed a mighty prince.

The Grand Duke Nicholas stepped up to Helen, and forthwith enrolled himself in the Helenic party. He was a stickler for etiquette, as all the world was soon destined to know : but he was a great admirer of beauty ; and the world and his wife might henceforth take notice, that, in his opinion, Helen Cameron was one of the most beautiful of women.

“Mademoiselle,” he said, “I feel for your position ; but you need not be ashamed of it. I saw it all ; and I maintain that you were justified in what you did. I hear that you have been pestered by his highness before ; and, if ladies were debarred from using the weapons which nature (or, as in this case—art) has put into their hands, I know not what society would come to. Indeed, I honour you for your courage ; and I wish all persecuted ladies would follow your example.”

“It is a grand thing for a lady to have such a secret at her command,” said Princess Dons-

kaya significantly : "mademoiselle must have known the secret of his wig."

Helen had been sitting with her face buried in her hands. The Grand Duke's speech had soothed her, though she did not know who the speaker was, never having heard his voice before. She felt thankful to her champion, though too much upset to express her thanks in words. But, when she heard Princess Donskaya's cruel insinuation, she was aroused at once. The need of defending herself gave her strength to speak.

"Yes," she answered, "I knew before that his highness was bald : he happened to have left his wig in his cabin one night when we were wrecked at sea."

"That is a sufficient answer to your Highness," said the Grand Duke emphatically.

Helen removed her hands from her face, and for the first time saw the Grand Duke. Suddenly she sprang up. The rich colour mounted her cheek. Her eyes sparkled : her whole face became radiant : and she certainly looked surpassingly beautiful.

"Oh, your Imperial Highness," she exclaimed, "I did not know it was you. You have understood me from the greatness of

your own heart : none but the noble *can* judge aright. It sounds very poor to say ‘I thank you.’ But I do thank you from the bottom of my heart for defending me so generously.”

“No thanks are due to me, mademoiselle : it was my bounden duty, as a gentleman and a prince, to stand up for you.”

But Helen returned him no answer. She seemed petrified : slightly bending forward ; head stretched out ; mouth partly open ; eyes nearly starting out of their sockets ; amazement, awe, and even horror, painted on her face. What was that she was looking at ? A ghost ? Pale enough for one : pale enough to have just risen from the grave ! It moves : it comes toward her. O heavens, could it be ? Was it not a vision ; an “optical illusion ?” It comes nearer : nearer still ; ay, close by. It was he : CAPTAIN MALEENOVSKY !

Helen uttered a shriek, and fainted away.

CHAPTER VII.

CUPID AT PLAY.

“Till at the length, when Cupid spied
My scornful will and spiteful use,
And how I past not who was tied,
So that myself might still live loose,
He set himself to lie in wait,
And in my way he threw a bait.”

Tottel's Miscellany.

ALEXEYEV had been in no hurry about securing Rachel: never in any hurry about anything. For sundry reasons, it would be “a nice thing” to have her as his wife; though he could not hide from himself that there would be drawbacks to the gain. Latterly a deeper feeling had sprung up, which made the gain seem greater and the drawbacks less. But he had not unlearned an old maxim of his: “Not worth while to climb a tree to pluck the fruit.” When ripe, it would drop; and if it did not drop, most likely it was unripe. A lazy maxim—like himself.

His relation to Rachel had entered a curious stage. At first he had thought chiefly of her fortune, and of herself chiefly as an encumbrance on it. Her serious talk was a bore to

the gay young man. Not long before he began to respect her. When he said that he revered her back, there was a deeper feeling behind the playful banter. Her uprightness, her truthfulness, her unselfish devotion to what she believed to be right, impressed him a good deal, and counterbalanced the sourness : he was interested.

By-and-by the interest ripened into something warmer. He thought she had become softer and more lovable. A tenderness would often come over her face. Did she care for him, then ? The very thought made him fancy he was in love. A queer kind of love : just like himself, though ; a cool, easy, *non-chalant* species of the genus. He might have loved Helen Cameron more warmly. I dare say, as a matter of taste, he would rather have had Helen. But she was clearly out of his reach. As he said to himself : “ What use in straining oneself to pluck a fine apple, when very fair ones are within reach ? ” (By-the-by, many of his maxims must have suggested themselves to him when lying lounging on the ground.) Not a practical man ; too lazy for that : but his very laziness made him practical on this point. Seeing he could not

win the best, he put up with the second best.

Rachel had acquired great power over him, which she wielded for his good. Something in the air she breathed, which seemed to have a purifying influence over him. He became much steadier than of yore. He fell into the habit of consulting her about most things: rather a luxury to a man of his lazy temperament, not to have to decide for himself! Rachel had soon found out that he was over head and ears in debt, and took steps to set him free. He did not take the trouble to ascertain whence the money came: better, on the whole, not to inquire too minutely into the matter; pleasanter *not* to know that the money came out of her own pocket! Enough for him to enjoy a luxury which he had not known for years: the luxury of finding himself quite free; no creditor or dun to fear at any time, in any place!

The feeling was so agreeable, that he resolved to keep out of debt; that is to say, unless it cost too much effort! Indeed, it would have been hard for him to fall into debt again: he found that Rachel knew more about his money matters than he; and, as he

could not owe money without her knowing it, he kept himself clear. How Rachel knew so much about her fellow-creatures was an open question. Did the secret lie in those keen grey eyes of hers? Or did she keep a staff of spiritual police? But, whatever the cause, the effect was, on the whole, good to Alexeyev. He lived in wholesome awe of Rachel Randal. I daresay he still did things which he would have been ashamed to acknowledge to her; but there was some ground for the comfortable hope which she cherished, that he was a changed character.

Still she could not deceive herself into fancying that her mission was fulfilled. And now she had stronger reasons than ever for wishing it. How soon she found out that the interesting sinner was becoming a little too interesting for her peace of mind, it would be hard to say. The idea dawned upon her gradually. The first time it took a distinct shape and said to her, "Here I am," she spurned it with scorn. What! She, Rachel Randal, "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," fall in love with one of the "uncircumcised?" Out upon the thought! She merely took an interest in his welfare. But the idea was not so easily

dislodged: the next time she saw Alexeyev, she could not hide from herself that he *was* an interesting sinner. Oh, if her "mission" were only fulfilled!

Then came a hard struggle. She must strangle the new-born feeling. Wicked Cupid, what business have you in so righteous a soul? She called her creed to her help. From behind that entrenchment she met Alexeyev fearlessly. Alas! in his presence her fortifications toppled down as helplessly as the walls of Jericho before the trumpets. Nature proved stronger than her creed. But something *must* be done. Why not refuse to see him any more? What! cowardly flinch from her duty for safety's sake? Undo all that she had been busily doing the last few months? Abandon her work, when it was nearing completion? Send him back to his debts and his evil haunts? Never! Better run a little risk. She did run it, and it proved not a little. After she had seen him a few more times, the thought of flying from the danger vanished out of sight. Matters were in this state at the time our story has reached.

The day after the ball Alexeyev was wending his steps towards Mr. Randal's house.

His easy, *nonchalant* air was dashed by more self-consciousness than usual; and his face was lit up with a smile which said that he was well pleased with his errand. His errand was to clinch his little business with Rachel: that is to say, if he found everything smooth. He was not one to make heroic efforts about anything. He did not find Rachel alone: Jenny was with her, as she always was. But he had hoped (as he hoped other foolish things) that by some chance he might catch her alone. Well, the offer must be put off to some other day.

“What is this I hear about Helen Cameron?” asked Rachel. “You were at the ball: do tell us all about it.”

“Not much to tell, mademoiselle: behaved like a heroine; behold, that is all,” answered Alexeyev.

“Oh, then, she did not disgrace herself?”

“Disgrace herself! But is it possible for such a beauty as Mademoiselle Cameron to disgrace herself?”

“Certainly. You think too much of beauty. What is beauty? A mere outside thing: nothing to do with character.”

“But is it possible to think too much of beauty in *your* presence?”

Alexeyev had taken a false step in praising Helen's beauty; and this was his way of making amends. There was a slight change in his demeanour in the presence of ladies. He had still much of the easy *nonchalance* which seemed a part of his nature. But he was more alert; more actively polite. He had two faces; one for gentlemen, the other for ladies. At this moment his handsome face was lit up with a light which the presence of a man never could kindle in him; and there was something so winning in his air and manner, that Rachel was softened at once.

“One does not know when to believe you,” she said, smiling; “you are always flattering.”

“A witness to my sincerity, that can't deceive.”

“Who is this witness?”

“Carry it in my bosom.”

“Your conscience?”

“Better than my conscience: *that* may deceive; but *this*—never! *Voilà!*”

And Alexeyev brought forth a pocket mirror out of his breast-pocket, and gravely handed it to Rachel.

“I think you mean sincerely,” she said; “but I don’t like flattery.”

“A great mistake,” answered Alexeyev: “never flatters; never varies; about the truest friend I have.”

“I heard that Helen had been coquetting with a great nobleman,” continued Rachel.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed Alexeyev. “Coquetting! New name for repelling a man with scorn. Imprint it on one’s memory! Yes, mademoiselle coquetted with highness Prince Boriatinsky: highness pursuing without regard to feelings; mademoiselle loathing and detesting highness! Coquetting! Admirable description of situation! Author has genius for truth.”

“Why had he pursued her, then?”

“Highness venerable donkey!”

“There now!” cried Jenny: “I told you so.”

“But what took place at the ball, then?” asked Rachel.

“Highness accosts mademoiselle: mademoiselle repels highness. Highness importunate: mademoiselle indignant. Highness puts hand to arm: mademoiselle puts hand to head. Highness pulls arm: mademoiselle

pulls hair. Highness bald : mademoiselle in tears. *Voilà* : that's all !”

“Oh, those wicked balls !” cried Rachel.

“Then she was not to blame ?” said Jenny.

“Certainly not, mademoiselle : Imperial Highness says that she has done quite right.”

Alexeyev had spoken with a warmth unusual with him. Was Rachel jealous ? She cried :

“You defend her warmly !”

“Defend *you* just as warmly if misrepresented behind back.”

A doubtful point that ! Still Rachel was touched : one of those tender looks came over her face, which encouraged Alexeyev so much. Ah, if Jenny were not in the room ! Rachel said :

“It was bold in her to pull his hair.”

Alexeyev chose to misunderstand her.

“Brave ?” he exclaimed : “yes, mademoiselle very brave. Acted like an Amazon, or an American heroine. Indeed, fought in American fashion : scalped him !”

“I mean it was unwomanly.”

“Very unwomanly !” answered Alexeyev :

“sensible remark. When man is importunate, woman must submit. No struggling; no resistance: submit to destiny.”

“I didn’t mean that.”

“Beg mademoiselle’s pardon. Credited mademoiselle with more sublime resignation than Mademoiselle Cameron. What would mademoiselle have done in such a case?”

“I should not have pulled his hair.”

“Pulled his nose, perhaps?”

“Don’t talk nonsense!” said Rachel.

“Beg pardon. Not nonsense: highness’s nose inviting to be pulled. Most prominent feature in venerable face: stands out like pump-handle, begging to be handled. Temptation hard to resist: sublime virtue in passing it by and going to the hair beyond.”

“For shame!” cried Rachel angrily: “how dare you speak in that vulgar style?”

“Pardon, mademoiselle.”

Some ground for Rachel’s wrath: Lieutenant Alexeyev not over choice in his language before ladies. Strange that she could bear his company at all! But, in justice to her, I must say that he had seldom gone as far before. Her injustice to Helen Cameron had aroused him, and made him show rather more

than usual of the coarser side of his nature. Rachel was shocked. She not only pulled Alexeyev short, but at once gave a serious turn to the talk. Alexeyev, after being bored to his heart's content, took his leave.

CHAPTER VIII.

NICHOLAS.

“See what a grace was seated on his brow :
Hyperion’s curls ; the front of Jove himself ;
An eye like Mars, to threaten or command.”

SHAKSPERE: *Hamlet*.

WHEN Alexeyev returned to the palace, he was told that the Grand Duke Nicholas had called for him, and was angry at his absence. Blessing his star that he was in full uniform, and in apple-pie order, he went to the Grand Duke’s cabinet.

Worth looking at, that Imperial Highness. Frame colossal, though symmetrical in shape. Head well worthy to stand on such a frame : not a large but a beautiful head, of the Greek type, forehead and nose in one straight line. The eye the most striking feature in the face : a large blue eye, which seemed to look one through and through ; so keen that few could stand its glance even when at rest, but when aroused with anger, really awful to encounter. Sternness the strongest expression in the face. A face that sometimes smiled with the mouth, but seldom with the eye : so

that piercing eye and beautiful mouth seemed out of tune with one another. A cold marble face, grand and noble, but not winning and sweet.

You may wonder whether Lieutenant Alexeyev wore the same easy air of *nonchalance* before Imperial Highness as before his friends. Yes, just the same. Here was a test : Imperial Highness evidently displeased ; brow clouded, mouth in tune with eye. But Alexeyev approached him without fear. Well, he was a privileged man, like the Fool of the middle ages.

“Where have you been ?” asked the Grand Duke, fixing his eye sternly on the young man : “again at your lazy tricks—eh ?”

Alexeyev knew from of old that he could parry the Grand Duke’s wrath best with his bantering style. So he answered promptly :

“Such hard work, Imperial Highness ! Forced to snatch a little rest whenever one can get it.”

Of course, the fact was that Lieutenant Alexeyev had nothing, or next to nothing, to do. Imperial Highness smiled (with his mouth), while his eye still rested sternly on his aide-de-camp as he said :

“Never you fear! Busier times will come; and see if I don’t work you to death.”

“Best cure going for hard work, Imperial Highness,” said Alexeyev airily: “surest way to rest; the rest of the grave, and all that sort of thing.”

The Grand Duke scanned Alexeyev narrowly. Nothing to find fault with in his appearance: uniform smart; every hook fastened, every button in its place. As the result of his scrutiny, he said:

“You have improved; but you still stoop too much.”

“Soon correct that, Imperial Highness,” answered Alexeyev promptly: “mean to sew up a poker inside the back of my coat. Soon be stiff as a poker!”

“I will have an iron cage to fit your body, and make you wear it next your skin.”

“Capital idea! Shall then be the Man in the Iron Mask, and all that. One great advantage: when you strike me, you’ll punish your own hands.”

“I will take care to strike your face.”

“No, you won’t, Imperial Highness: have too much taste to spoil my beautiful face.”

“Your tongue will be your bane one day ; but you are incorrigible, I see.”

“Mistaken again, Imperial Highness : fact is, you have never gone the right way to work.”

“What is that ?”

“Outshine me in talk,” said Alexeyev with the utmost coolness : “shall then hide my diminished head—in iron casque, to match iron cage.”

None but Lieutenant Alexeyev durst address the Grand Duke Nicholas in that style. Imperial Highness severely punished the slightest disorder in his appearance ; and, to make up for it, allowed him the freest use of his tongue.

“A truce to your conceits !” he said.

“Find so many of them jostling each other in my brain ; never get to the end of them. Life not long enough to give utterance to them all : even if one lived to the age of Methuselah—which the fates forefend !”

“I must hand you over to my brother Constantine,” said the Grand Duke, laughing : “he’ll knock them all out of your brain in a trice.”

Brother Constantine famed for the skill with

which he knocked all kinds of conceit out of a man.

"Thanks, Imperial Highness," answered Alexeyev: "quite content with your service—for the present!"

"You'd find it hot work, I can tell you."

"Find it quite hot enough here: *that* would be jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire; wouldn't suit my constitution—delicate constitution, and all that."

"Then I'd better hand you over to my brother Alexander," rejoined Nicholas.

"*That* would be jumping out of the frying-pan into—a pail of water!" cried Alexeyev, laughing: "wouldn't it be deliciously cool, Imperial Highness? Suit my constitution."

"But not your inner health, I think," answered the Grand Duke, fairly laughing.

"Quite right this time for a wonder, Imperial Highness! Shouldn't know what to do with myself at his pious Court; should be like a fish out of water, or rather like a rat *in* the pail of water!"

"Afraid of drowning? Never fear: a scape-grace like you not made to be *drowned*!"

"Think your service suits my constitution

best on the whole. Never liked extremes : temperate climate, *via media*, and all that."

The Grand Duke suddenly asked, in a tone which would have startled most people :

"What does the aide-de-camp deserve who is slovenly in his person and reckless in his habits ?"

"To be dismissed," answered Alexeyev coolly.

"Spoken like an oracle ! Do you not think that you deserve to be dismissed ?"

"No, Imperial Highness."

"Why not ?"

"Good-for-nothing once : better now."

"What do you deserve now, then ?"

"To be promoted," answered Alexeyev coolly.

Nicholas was amused at his coolness, and said :

"Spoken like an oracle again, *Captain Alexeyev*."

The unfamiliar title sounded pleasantly in the young man's ears. He did not seem taken by surprise, but took it as a matter of course, and, bowing low, answered :

"Much obliged, Imperial Highness."

"I have been thoroughly satisfied with

you for many months," said the Grand Duke.

"Owe it all to Mademoiselle Randal."

"And who is Mademoiselle Randal?"

"A young English lady: made me what I am: should like to make her my wife."

"Are you betrothed to Mademoiselle Randal?" asked the Grand Duke, looking rather black.

Dear little Jenny Cameron! for keeping him from entangling himself, and enabling him to say without a shade of falsehood:

"By no means, Imperial Highness."

"We shall speak of that afterwards," said the Grand Duke: "at present I have other work for you to do. As a mark of my approval, I mean to send you to Taganrog. Go and get ready to set off."

Captain Alexeyev made a low bow and withdrew.

On coming out of the cabinet, he was told that a young lady was waiting to see him. Scapegrace never loth to meet young ladies, especially if they were pretty. He eagerly rushed to the room where she was. Well, he was disappointed. A queer sample of "young ladyhood!" Even he could not call her

pretty, though his charity, in the matter of young ladies, was large. Bony, gawky, unwieldy : so tall that the new-fledged captain felt like a dwarf beside her. What was he to do with her ? Such a sell !

What was mademoiselle's pleasure ? Mademoiselle didn't know no for'n lingo ; but if he would be good enough to call on Miss Helen Cameron—Miss Helen wanted so badly to see for'n hofficer ! It so happened that the despatches for Taganrog were not ready, so he got leave to call on Helen.

Rachel would not have been well pleased, if she could have looked into his "in'ards," as he eagerly hastened to Mr. Cameron's house. The easy *nonchalant* scapegrace was fairly in a flutter for once. Mademoiselle Cameron longing to see him ! The great beauty, the rich heiress, smitten with him ? No need to pluck a fair apple : the finest, ripe enough to drop into his hands ? What a dear little creature Jenny Cameron was, to keep him from binding himself to Rachel Randal !

CHAPTER IX.

THE FALSE POSITION FALSER STILL.

“Unless you can muse in a crowd all day
On the absent face that fix'd you ;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you ;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving ;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past ;—
Oh, never call it loving !”

MRS. BROWNING: *A Woman's Shortcomings.*

WHEN Helen Cameron fainted at the ball, she had been carried home at once. It was some time before she recovered from the shock ; and even then she could not quite understand what had taken place. The past seemed a dim haze. Was it a dream ? or was it a reality ? Had Captain Malcenovsky really appeared at the ball ? or was it only a vision or a ghost ? Some time before she could get an answer to these questions. No one about her to whom she could apply.

At length she bethought her of Alexeyev. But how to get at him ? Write a letter ? Never do. Go herself ? Never do : something awkward in asking for a handsome young officer at the Anitchkin Palace ! What

then? Send him Sal. Sal had willingly undertaken the task: ready to do anything to soothe Miss Helen. Full of courage, she had set off for the Anitchkin Palace, and, after some laughable adventures, which would be worth recording had I the time, had safely reached Alexeyev, as we have seen.

Helen received the young officer in the breakfast-room. He looked handsomer than ever; his usual easy *nonchalant* air dashed by a look of eager interest. Helen briefly begged him to give an account of what had taken place at the ball. Handsome young officer taken aback: queer beginning of love-scene! Nevertheless, he gave a characteristic, bantering sketch of the scene in Prince Donskoy's ball-room. But he never mentioned Captain Maleenovsky's name. A vision, then!

"What made me faint?" asked Helen.

"Highly-wrought feelings, doubtless."

Alexeyev had heard of no love-passages between Maleenovsky and Helen, and of course never dreamt that his sudden re-appearance had caused her to faint. He meant, feelings "highly wrought" by the foregoing scene with Prince Boriatinsky.

"But was there no one else beside the

Grand Duke Nicholas and Prince Boriatsky?" asked Helen.

"No one in particular."

A vision, then, or a ghost.

"I need not tell a shrewd man like Lieutenant Alexeyev that——"

"*Captain Alexeyev.* Authorities forced to recognise my merits at last."

"I heartily congratulate you, *Captain Alexeyev.* But I was going to say that I thought I saw a ghost at the ball: the ghost of one who was killed in a duel in England."

Captain Alexeyev burst out laughing.

"Oh, my friend, Captain Maleenovsky!" he exclaimed. "Mademoiselle not heard? Not killed, only dreadfully wounded. Interesting case for surgeon! Fortunate in securing most eminent surgeon in England: neatly patched up, and set going on his legs for a second edition of life. Narrow escape, though! Quite forgot, mademoiselle: Captain Maleenovsky present at the ball. In time to pick mademoiselle up."

This ended the interview; and, at the same time, Helen's uncertainty, and Alexeyev's dream of love.

And then began an inward struggle in

Helen, which lasted many days. At last she clearly saw the falseness of the step she had taken. But how to get out of the false position? Only one way: by breaking off her engagement with Frederick Randal. Ah, not so easy to do that! She had wronged him once; and she shrank from wounding him again. Tied hand and foot, as she thought; shut up to a course which she loathed, without a loophole of escape!

In her perplexity, she again longed for some one to consult. Oh, if Mrs. Beresford were there! She wrote to her friend, fully stating the case, and asking for advice; but she knew it would be weeks before she could receive an answer. How slowly and mournfully those days rolled on! Not a ray of light; not a hint to guide her on her way. She would pace her room for hours, plunged in thought and torn by cruel doubts.

In this state weeks passed away. During those weeks great events took place, which Helen scarcely heeded. On hearing of Alexander's death, the Grand Duke Constantine renounced his claim to the throne; and his brother Nicholas became Emperor of Russia. The *Union* raised the standard of revolt. Some

of the troops refused to swear allegiance to their new sovereign; and it was only after cannon was employed that the insurrection was crushed. Numbers of the noblest men in St. Petersburg were arrested, and were now in prison.

The evening after the revolt there was a party at Mr. Randal's house; and Helen had promised to be there. She shrank from going. What would she not give to be spared that evening's agony! As the streets were still deemed not over-safe, Fred came to fetch her. On the way to Mr. Randal's, he talked of his aunt, Lady Romford, who had just arrived, most unexpectedly, at St. Petersburg. Now this Lady Romford's name happened to be one of Helen's bugbears. Rachel, in their former intimacy, used to speak of her as the richest, grandest, stateliest lady she knew. Fred was never tired of alluding to her. The first letter he wrote at Dantzic was to Lady Romford. He now spoke of his aunt in terms of awe, and seemed nervous lest Helen should not make a good impression on her. Helen caught his nervousness, and felt quite uncomfortable as she entered the drawing-room.

Fred led her forward to introduce her to

Lady Romford, who sat at the farther end of the room. But what was that? Helen rushed up to the great lady, and fairly jumped into her arms. Fred looked astounded. What would Lady Romford think? What manners! Was he most surprised or pleased when he saw Lady Romford fold his Helen to her heart, and kiss her again and again? Was that Lady Romford, or was it not? The great lady who had always seemed so stiff and haughty to him! Was the world turned topsy-turvey? Was he standing on his heels, or on his head? But Fred did not stand alone in his astonishment. A buzz ran through the room.

"I did not know that you had met Miss Cameron before," said old Mr. Randal.

"Oh, yes, brother. I may say that Helen Cameron is an old friend of mine," answered Lady Romford.

During the evening, Helen clung to Lady Romford, greatly to the disgust of Rachel Randal, who, as a pious girl, thought she had a special claim on her great and pious aunt. In a crowded room, of course, there was no entering upon any confidential talk. But, as Helen rose, at the close of the evening, to put on her things, before going home, she cleverly

managed to whisper in Lady Romford's ear :

"I want to see you alone so much, dear Mrs. Beresford. Do come up-stairs with me."

Lady Romford rose ; but Rachel came forward, as if to accompany them. Helen was annoyed ; but there was no help for it. When they were in the bed-room, Lady Romford said :

"You are surprised, darling Helen, to meet me here under another name. Rachel knows I had occasion to assume another name. The fact was, that I was not happy with my husband. He is gone to his account ; and I do not wish to rake up the past. But I had to leave him. He would have forced me back ; and I had to hide myself, and take another name. Under that name, I lived for some time near Ulleswater. So I have continued to use the name of Beresford, whenever I have gone to Drayton Hall. I want to have a long chat with you, darling. When can you come to see me?"

"Any day."

"To-morrow at twelve, then."

When Helen returned home, it was past Mr. Cameron's bed-time ; but she found him

anxiously awaiting her. He seemed greatly excited.

"Is it true, Helen, that Lady Romford is in Petersburg?" he eagerly asked.

Helen could not make out why he was so much moved. Why look so strangely at her?

"Oh, yes, dear papa," she answered; "and who do you think she is?"

"Who do I think she is?" exclaimed Mr. Cameron: "why, Lady Romford is—Lady Romford."

"Ay, but she is somebody else, papa," answered Helen roguishly.

"What do you mean?"

"Somebody else I know: somebody you have often heard me talk about. Guess who it is."

What was the matter with Mr. Cameron? What was Lady Romford to him? He cried out eagerly:

"Don't torture me, Helen, dear; but speak out. Somebody else! What do you mean?"

Helen put him out of his torture without any further loss of time.

"Why, darling papa, Lady Romford is no other than the Mrs. Beresford with whom I stayed so long in the summer."

“ Wheugh ! ”

And a broad smile of pleased surprise came over Mr. Cameron’s plain honest face.

“ You seem pleased, papa.”

“ To think that I should not have guessed it before ! What other stranger could so suddenly have felt so deep an interest in my daughter ? I see it all now : thank God, there is hope yet ! ”

All this was Greek to Helen.

“ Do you know Lady Romford, papa ? ”

Mr. Cameron did not hear the question, or did not choose to answer it. He asked abruptly :

“ And what do you think of Mrs. Beresford under her new name, my child ? ”

“ Oh, papa, she is the noblest woman I have ever seen,” answered Helen enthusiastically.

Mr. Cameron quite chuckled.

“ So you like Lady Romford—eh ? ”

“ Like her ? It is almost treason to talk of ‘ liking ’ in such a case. I adore her.”

Mr. Cameron chuckled again, took a few turns round the room, and then said once more :

“ So you like Lady Romford—eh ? ”

Mr. Cameron continued to walk about, with

delight clearly written on his face. Late as it was, he seemed too excited to wish for sleep : contrary to his wont, he remained in the room a long time, and talked a great deal on many subjects. But all through, ever and anon, came the old question : "So you like Lady Romford—eh?"

Among other things, the talk turned on the revolt which had broken out the day before. Mr. Cameron belonged to a family which had distinguished itself by upholding liberal views during the long reign of the Tory party in England and Scotland. A thorough Liberal himself, he had long been disgusted with the state of things in Russia ; and, though far too wary (canny Scot that he was) to speak out his mind openly, he thoroughly sympathised with the conspirators, and, so far from being shocked at the outbreak, looked on its authors as heroes.

Helen had been brought up in her father's views, and shared them with all the strength of her enthusiastic nature. Now that Mr. Cameron was alone with her, and pretty sure that there were no ears in the walls, he spoke warmly about the unhappy men who had been checkmated the day before. He knew some of

the leaders ; and he spoke of them as martyrs in the cause of freedom. One expression, which he used, struck Helen very much. In discussing the nature of their "crime," he said it might be a crime against "the law," but not against "society."

CHAPTER X.

THE NECKLACE.

“Learn to win a lady’s faith
Nobly, as the thing is high;
Bravely, as for life and death,
With a loyal gravity.”

MRS. BROWNING: *The Lady’s ‘Yes.’*

WHEN Frederick Randal made his appearance the following morning, Helen could see that his face beamed with a strange light. Latterly it had looked cloudy enough: he must have seen that there was a screw loose somewhere. But now all that was changed: his face was lit up with joy, almost triumph. Why? Had he a plaister for the wound? *Nous verrons.*

He took a handsome morocco case out of his pocket: was the plaister there? Helen had such a bad headache that morning that she scarcely saw him open it. He brought out a magnificent necklace, made up chiefly of diamonds and pearls, but studded with many other precious stones. Magnificent indeed! It had belonged to his mother; had cost £10,000, and was now thought to be worth

much more. Mr. Randal had handed it over to his son as soon as he was betrothed to Helen; and Fred had had it reset in the newest fashion by the first jeweller in St. Petersburg. The pride with which he tried to fasten it round her neck! The pleasure with which he looked on it as a kind of dog's collar, with his own name engraved on it, which would henceforth stamp that beautiful neck (and the owner of it) as his own!

Helen stood aghast. The same thought (though not the same feeling) passed through her mind. Was not that necklace indeed a collar around her neck? While she doubted whether she ought not to break the tie which already bound her to Frederick Randal, here was another coil thrown around her, making it stouter and harder to snap. She shrank from the touch of that necklace: the cold stones seemed to burn like red-hot iron on her bosom.

"Oh, Fred," she said, "I don't want it—indeed, I don't! It is far too fine for me."

"There is not another woman whom it would suit so well," answered Fred.

"I can't wear it!" cried Helen.

And she almost struggled with Randal, and

tried to prevent him from fastening the necklace. But she felt so faint (doubtless the result of headache), that Fred finished the task he had in hand, saying :

“You must wear it for my sake, darling.”

“Don’t press me, Fred,” exclaimed Helen earnestly : “it will be the better for you.”

“What do you mean ?”

“I can’t explain it now : wait till to-morrow.”

She thought of her coming interview with Lady Romford : likely to solve the problem.

“If you love me, Helen, darling, you will not refuse my present,” said Fred.

Helen pushed into a corner : what to do now ? Rather than accept the bondage-gift, would it not be better to tell him the whole truth, without waiting for the interview ?

“Ah, Fred !” she cried feelingly, “I doubt if I love you as much as your love deserves.”

“Nonsense !”

He tried to laugh it off ; but he began to feel uneasy. Whither was this tending ?

“No, Fred, it is not nonsense : it is something serious, I assure you. You know, when I became engaged to you, I thought that Captain Maleenovsky was dead.”

Fred burst out laughing: how the sound grated on Helen's ears! There was on his face the same look of joy, almost of triumph, which Helen had noticed at first.

"You needn't be uneasy on that score," he said: "he'll trouble us no more."

"What do you mean?" asked Helen.

"Do you remember my making you angry once by calling him a rascal?"

"Well?"

"It turns out that I was quite right: he *is* a rascal, a precious scoundrel, and no mistake."

The blood mounted to Helen's face.

"What has he done?"

"He has committed a crime, for which every one says he will either be hanged or sent to Siberia."

Helen suddenly became pale again. A dreadful doubt took hold of her: the words, "Siberia or the scaffold," kept buzzing in her ears. She felt so faint, that she was forced to sit down, to keep from falling. But, even in those moments of agony, she had time to be utterly disgusted with the joyful and triumphant tone in which Randal spoke of Captain Maleenovsky's crime. The fetters,

which bound her to Frederick Randal, were snapping asunder of their own accord. Even the necklace, which he had fastened on, no longer a collar!

“What crime?” she asked.

“It seems that he has been a member of the *Union* for more than a year: he was caught in the revolt; and he is now in the fortress along with the rest.”

O most “lame and impotent conclusion!” And yet how unexpectedly powerful! Commonplace words; but words which had a more electric effect on Helen Cameron than the most soul-stirring eloquence. Her soul sprang up, full-armed, almost astonished at its own strength.

The load of anxiety and doubt which was rolled off Helen’s mind! This, then, was the “crime” with which Captain Maleenovsky had charged himself: the crime which was to land him in “Siberia or the scaffold.” How was it she had not at the time been more struck with the distinction which he himself had drawn? “A crime against society; at least, against *the law*!” The very distinction which her father had drawn the night before! It made all the difference between a

scoundrel and a hero ; and she might have been quite sure that Captain Maleenovsky was a hero and not a scoundrel.

It was wonderful to see how strong she suddenly became. She sprang from her seat ; faintness, weakness, headache, all forgot ;—and stood before Frederick Randal like a lioness defending her cubs. There was such joy in her face, that the news which Randal brought might have been that Captain Maleenovsky was promoted to great honour and wealth, instead of being in prison in danger of “Siberia or the scaffold.” All thought of his danger was for the moment swallowed up in the joy of finding him the same clean-handed hero as of yore.

But, together with this joy, there was wrath, deep wrath, against his libeller. She tore the necklace from her neck, and flung it on the floor ; and the pearls and diamonds and precious stones lay scattered about. So many hundreds of pounds, spent in resetting those jewels, gone in a moment !

“Away with your paltry presents !” she cried passionately : “I scorn them as coming from a man who can speak as you have spoken this morning !”

Randal was utterly bewildered by this sudden outburst of wrath, and asked in a helpless kind of way :

“ Why, what have I said ? ”

“ How dare you apply such terms to a man whose boots you are not worthy to clean ? You forsooth ! You, who live a life of ease and sloth ; you who are wrapped up in yourself ; you who never thought a noble thought, and never did a noble deed ;—*you* to call a man a ‘ rascal,’ because, for his country’s sake, he has risked his freedom and his life ! Out with you ! I despise you ! ”

Frederick Randal was so astounded at the issue of his own handiwork, that he was stupefied, and, for some minutes, could not utter a word.

In the meanwhile, Helen was wrapped up in her own thoughts which came thronging thick upon her. At last she had found a clue to the mystery of Captain Maleenovsky’s treatment of her. She could understand it all now : it was as clear as daylight. He loved her : he loved her ! He had never ceased to love her from the first. But, “ more than a year ago ” (that was about the time when he rescued her from the flood), he had joined

the *Union*, and so rendered himself liable to "Siberia or the scaffold;" and he would not involve her in his ruined fortunes. All the things, which had seemed most mysterious in him, were so many heroic acts of self-control. Thank God, she could see it all clearly now! Not a speck on his shield!

And what to do now? As clear as sunlight to her: to stand by him, in life and in death! Go with him to Siberia; stand by him on the scaffold! Let the whole world see what she thought of him! Avow her love without shame! Toil and drudge for his release; and, if she failed, then share his fortunes, whatever they might be! And henceforth that was her fixed resolve.

After a while, Fred found his tongue again.

"Helen, dear, I am sure you don't mean what you say," he said, in a wounded tone.

"I do: every word."

She spoke calmly and firmly. Her wrath had vented itself in her words: and it was followed by a terrible calm, far more crushing than the fiercest rage. If Randal had had much insight into character, he would have seen that no words of his could move her now. But he tried to change her resolve.

“Just think, Helen, what that amounts to.”

“I *have* thought: I have counted the cost. Frederick Randal, I have done with you for ever!”

“But this is infamous.”

“The great mistake was to engage myself to you at all. But, though I do not wish to clear myself of one atom of the blame that belongs to me, I must say, Fred, that you were as much to blame as I. I declined: and you pressed me; pressed me when I was sick and feeble and scarcely mistress of myself. You knew all the time that I gave my consent most reluctantly.”

“I knew no such thing.”

“The very day after, I begged you to release me; but you would not. Ever since, my life has been, more or less, one of inward wretchedness. I have tried to love you, but I have not succeeded. God knows I have tried to please you; but the more I tried, the more I have shrunk from the thought of becoming your wife. Therefore, Fred, I think we had better part.”

“There are two parties to a bargain.”

“Frederick Randal, I LOVE ANOTHER.”

She was quite calm; but there was a pathos

in her voice which would have moved a generous man.

“And yet all this time you have been pretending to love *me*,” said Randal.

“If I have ever given you needless pain, I beg your pardon. I know it was right in me to refuse your present just now; but I feel that I might have done it in a way less galling to your feelings. I am sorry that I lost my temper for a moment; and I hope that you’ll forgive me. Poor innocent jewels!” she continued, stooping down, and picking them up with care; “what had you done to offend me? What beauties you are!”

Poor Fred had quite collapsed; shrivelled up by Helen’s scorching, scathing words.

“I know too well what disappointed love means not to feel for you, Fred,” said Helen.

Her heart relented toward the young man, as she saw how deeply he was taking the thing to heart. As the hopelessness of his suit became clear, he had begun to feel crushed and broken. All his bright hopes shattered in a moment!

But he clung to Helen’s last words, as a drowning man clutches a straw. He cried:

“Have pity on me!”

“I feel, Fred, that the truest kindness to you would be to see you no more. How could I make you happy, when I love another man with all my heart?”

“But you would forget him in time,” pleaded Fred; “and you would learn to love me.”

“Never!” answered Helen emphatically: “it is too late now. Besides, if I ever could have deserted him, this is not the time: when he is in trouble, in danger, perhaps on the brink of the grave. Farewell, Fred!”

Even Fred saw that it was quite useless to plead any longer; and he sadly took his leave. This was the issue of his handiwork! This the plaister he had brought for the wound!

CHAPTER XI.

LADY ROMFORD.

“Much had she learnt in little time. In part
It was ill counsel had misled the girl
To vex true hearts : yet was she but a girl.
‘Ah, fool, and made myself a queen of farce !
When comes another such ? Never, I think,
Till the sun drop dead from the signs.’ Her voice
Choked, and her forehead sank upon her hands,
And her great heart through all the faultful Past
Went sorrowing in a pause I dared not break.

TENNYSON : *The Princess*.

A GREAT change had come over Helen. Henceforth she seemed clothed with a strength which she had not known before. No more wavering or faltering ; no more uncertainty or doubt. For the first time she clearly saw her goal before her ; and, right or wrong, she went straight toward it with unerring aim, and a force of will which nothing could subdue. Soul thoroughly awakened at last. No more a grub grovelling in the dust ; no more a chrysalis, even, patiently awaiting its wings ; but a butterfly, beautiful or ugly, soaring upward in the sky. Excelsior !

Her life was henceforth sacred to Captain Maleenovsky : that was the one settled point

in her mind. But one barrier in her way. Her father: how forsake him for another? Smaller barriers no barriers to her: right or wrong, her now winged soul flew right over them, tall as they might be. That she was not betrothed to Captain Maleenovsky; that he had not even made her an offer; that the world would call her forward and unmaidenly;—these things were as nothing to her. Enough for her that he loved her; that the very greatness of his love kept him from avowing it. He was now in danger: she would save him, or perish with him!

But her father? Well, the thought of him; the way in which her new-life destiny might touch him;—did give her the heartache. After Fred left, she walked up and down, with her hands clasped before her, and pondered the awful problem. Was her life her own to give away? Was it not her father's? Strong love, the deep joy of self-sacrifice, seemed to waft her away to dangers, hardships, toils; but her father stretched out a living hand, and held her back. Could she, should she, leave him alone? Who could solve the problem? Ah, thank God, she was not alone now! At last she had a friend near:

kindly in feeling, wise in counsel, strong in help. She hastily dressed herself, and went to Mr. Randal's house.

Lady Romford had a suite of rooms which opened into each other with folding-doors. One of the doors of the room into which Helen was shown stood partly open. Thence came two voices: one belonging to Lady Romford; the other, strange to say, to—Mr. Cameron! A deep, a solemn awe fell on Helen. That strange conjunction! It seemed as if destiny were drawing her to the spot where the awful problem was to be solved. She did not want to overhear the talk; but, while she was wavering, doubting what to do, two or three scraps of it fell upon her ear and rooted her to the spot. Lady Romford's sweet voice was saying:

“But what will dear Helen say?”

“She will be glad, Agnes: she worships you.”

“She may not relish the thought of a step-mother.”

Helen heard no more. No need to hear any more: those words had already solved the problem. Come what might, she would not leave her father alone: whatever became of her, he would have a wife to comfort him.

A strong impulse came upon her: she could not resist it. She almost ran into the room, rushed into Lady Romford's arms, threw her own round her neck, and clinging to her cried:

"Oh, let me have the joy of calling you mother: I so need a mother's counsel, a mother's love! Mamma! Will you not let me call you mamma? Mamma!"

Lady Romford's eyes filled with tears; and even Mr. Cameron found a handkerchief useful.

Before long, the two found themselves bound to each other for life. With that sweet fresh bond between them, it could not well have been otherwise: to say nothing of memories of old unquenched love; for I need scarcely say that Lady Romford was that Agnes Randal whom Mr. Cameron had loved in days gone by.

After a while, Mr. Cameron took his leave, feeling as proud of his daughter as of his wife-that-was-to-be. How soon his pride might receive a dreadful shock he little recked. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof. For his brief hour he cherished his little dream of welcoming that stately lady to a home which

was already graced by the presence of his beautiful daughter.

Helen was left alone with Lady Romford. It was not long before she unburdened her whole heart. Leaning her head against her friend's bosom, she told the sad tale: her friend caressing her the while, and making her feel at home; truly sheltered, for the first time, in a loving mother's arms. When Helen ceased speaking, Lady Romford said:

"This was what I feared all along, from the moment I received Fred's letter, telling me of your engagement. About the same time I ascertained that Captain Maleenovsky had recovered from his wound; and I made up my mind to come to St. Petersburg, and help you, if you needed help."

"Oh, how good you are to me!"

"Do you know, I feel already as if you were my own child; and, thank God, I have now full right to help you."

"Was it right in me to break off the engagement?" asked Helen.

"It was not right to make it."

"But having made it?"

"It would have been better for you to wait till after you had seen me."

“I feel that: I meant to do nothing till after I had seen you; but his words stung me.”

“One wrong does not justify another; and we have now to do with you, and not with him. You see, I don’t mean to flatter you.”

“I don’t want to be flattered,” said Helen earnestly: “I know I am full of faults; and I want to be scolded and punished when I do wrong. Oh, if I had had you for a mother, I should have been a different girl! Dear mamma! Be a true mother to me! Be faithful with me; tell me—tell me always—when I am wrong!”

“I will, my child.”

“I do so long to know what is right!” cried Helen passionately. “During the last few weeks I have felt so often utterly in the dark. What would I not have given for an hour’s chat with you, mamma?”

“We shall not part again in a hurry: shall we, dear Helen?”

Helen thought of her new destiny. But she did not speak of it yet; she had other things to speak about first. She said:

“I want to know whether it was right in me to break off the engagement, apart from the way in which I did it?”

Lady Romford was silent for a moment, and then answered :

“ I think it must have come to that. I myself know too well the misery of an ill-assorted marriage to blame you for breaking it off. You remember my telling you that, years ago, I loved a man who was worthy of my love. That man was your father.”

“ I am so glad ! ”

And, in spite of her own trouble, Helen clapped her hands with almost childish delight.

“ Does it not seem wonderful, that, after all these years, we should be reunited at last ? ”

“ It is beautiful ! ”

“ They have been dreadful years to me. Oh, Helen, the most wretched life on earth is to live with a man whom you cannot love ! It is a living death. I am thankful that you have escaped such a fate ; though I should have been more thankful still, if you had spared Fred’s feelings.”

“ Can I do anything to repair the wrong ? ”

“ We shall talk about that afterwards, my darling : in the meanwhile, let me thoroughly understand your case. What about this Captain Maleenovsky ? ”

“I love him!” cried Helen passionately
“I love him!”

“Do you still believe that he is worthy of you? What about his mysterious treatment of you?”

Helen told of the fresh clue which she had just got to Captain Maleenovsky's behaviour. Lady Romford could not but be shaken in her former opinion.

“I cannot desert him now that he is in trouble,” added Helen firmly: “I feel that my life is his; and I will stand by him in life and in death.”

“Have you thought of your father?”

“How can you ask? The thought of him is the only thing that has restrained me. But he has you to care for him now.”

“You speak in ignorance, child: nothing can make up to a father for the loss of a child.”

“You must plead my cause with him, dear mamma.”

Lady Romford could not undertake to do so: but she promised to think about it seriously; and Helen soon after took her leave.

After much thought, her ladyship came to

the same conclusion as Helen: that, except in one moment of weakness, Captain Maleenovsky had throughout acted with heroic self-mastery. Seeing the strength of Helen's love, and remembering her own experience, matrimonial and ante-matrimonial, she also thought that it would be best for Helen to carry out her purpose. She therefore resolved to throw the whole of her influence into the scale on Helen's side.

The first battle, which Helen had to fight, was with her father. Issue very doubtful.

CHAPTER XII.

HOME PLOT.

“He may not be deceived, as I gesse,
So that he werche after his wife’s rede :
Than may he boldly beren up his hede,
They ben so trewe, and therewithal so wise ;
For which, if thou werchen as the wise,
Do always so as women wol the rede.”

CHAUCER: *The Canterbury Tales.*

GREAT as was Mr. Cameron’s love for conspirators in the abstract, it was not great enough to make him bestow his daughter on one conspirator in the concrete: especially when said conspirator was foolish enough to put his head in the lion’s mouth; foolish enough to become a successful candidate for “Siberia or the scaffold.” When Lady Romford first broached the subject, he grew pale with anger. What! Give his daughter to a beggar; a beggar who in a few months might be in the hangman’s hands, and, if lucky enough to escape that fate, would certainly drag out the rest of his wretched life in Siberia! Helen was a fool to dream of it; and Lady Romford was—another, he would have said, if politeness had not checked him.

Helen was of age, and might do what she liked; but *he* would not sanction such mad proceedings!

Still Helen was not disheartened. She built much on Lady Romford's influence with Mr. Cameron; and she had not yet discarded the old belief that she herself could do anything with her father. Not for one moment did she falter in her purpose. The energy, the quiet power, with which she set about her task, astonished Lady Romford. But, in truth, Helen was an altered woman now. The great task, which she had set before herself, had inspired her soul and clothed her with the strength to do it. The deep joy of self-sacrifice made her think lightly of the hindrances and annoyances in her way. Hardships, difficulties, dangers, were only so many barriers to be overleapt.

How much support she received from Lady Romford, she herself could never reckon. But she had as warm a supporter in Sal. Mr. Cameron was threatened with a conspiracy in his own household; and if he had not, like most modern kings, surrendered to the revolution, his theoretical admiration for conspirators would soon have been brought to a practical test.

He had just been reading the "Antiquary;" and he bitterly complained, with Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck, that his "womankind" gave him no peace. Lady Romford, Helen, Sal, each in her own way, teased him without ceasing. But "the crowning victory," which was destined to change the colour of Helen's life, was achieved by Sal. And proud she was of it.

Mr. Cameron was fond of joking with her about sweethearts. One day, while Lady Romford, Helen, and herself were with him in the drawing-room, she said, *apropos* of one of his jokes :

"I niver hed no sweetheart but one. Least-ways he niver were rayal sweetheart of mine. 'Cause why? Ye sees, we niver kep' company."

"How was that?" asked Mr. Cameron.

He thought only of storing up materials of future jokes against Sal ; little dreaming what a huge practical joke the wide-awake girl was planning against himself.

"Ye sees, he had sum'at to do wi' one o' them Unions as wanted to upset the guv'ment : and he feared as how he might be cotched and strung up ; and so he didn't want to lug me in along wi' 'un."

“He was a fine fellow!” said Mr. Cameron heartily. “But what became of him?”

“He were cotched at last, and put in quod.”

“Well?”

“Well, in course, they strung ’un up.”

“Hanged him?”

“As fast as a trivet.”

“And did you go to see him while he was in prison?” asked Lady Romford.

“I, my Leddy!” exclaimed Sal, with the greatest seeming scorn. “I to demean mysen’ by wisiting a man in quod! I to throw mysen away on a beggar in disgrace! Not I, my Leddy!”

“At least you tried to save him?”

“Not I, my Leddy! What bizness were it o’ his’n, to meddle wi’ poltics, ’stead o’ lookin’ arter his own skin?”

“I didn’t think you were such a cold-blooded creature, Sal!” said Mr. Cameron, in disgust.

“Cold-blooded! I s’poses that ’ere be the name ye gives to what in gentlefolk ye calls perudence. Look at Miss Helen, yere! She got a sweetheart in quod; and yet she hev’n’t been to see ’un, or tried to save ’un, as I’ve

heard on. And I aint aweer as ye hev iver called her cold-blooded for that 'ere."

This home-thrust had a strange effect on Mr. Cameron. Almost instinctively he glanced at Lady Romford, and saw that her eyes were fixed on him in a searching way. Helen, too, had clearly seen the application of the story. Every one seemed to say: *Tu quoque!* He could not resist the force of the *argumentum ad hominem*. He had been caught in his own trap; and it was not long before he "surrendered at discretion."

The outpost having been won, Lady Romford and Helen pushed on the campaign with growing heart and hope. As to ways and means of deliverance? They both thought that the best thing would be to see Majesty, and lay Captain Maleenovsky's case before him. But how to get at Majesty? Reverend Ebenezer Birkenshaw acquainted with Prince Galeetzin; and highness said to have great influence with Majesty. First step: to see the reverend gentleman; that very day. Time, Saturday afternoon: time when he would be busy preparing his sermons. Still, no time to lose; and he was known to welcome all comers at all times. A highly convenient minister, I must say!

Reverend Ebenezer Birkenshaw in his study: enter Lady Romford and Helen. Reverend Ebenezer utterly unconscious of their presence, buried in his own thoughts: dull grey eyes deeply sunk in sockets, seemingly thousands of miles away in the depths of space, giving him the air of a man who lived in fellowship with spirits, and not with beings of flesh and blood. Servant had announced "Miss Cameron;" and he had said, "Let her come in." But he had either said it unconsciously, or forgotten all about it. Lady Romford and Helen stood near the door, wondering what to do next. A most ridiculous situation!

"Here's a situation!" whispered Lady Romford to Helen: "what are we to do now?"

No need to whisper: the listening Mr. Birkenshaw far away. Helen laughed quietly at her companion's bewildered look and air, and softly whispered back:

"We must wait till he comes back to the outer world."

"Are there no means of *pulling* him back?"

"Why not try?" said Helen, laughing.

"We have bearded the lion in his den; and he looks a tame creature after all, as if he

might 'roar like any sucking dove.' I think one might venture to take liberties with him. But can he really 'roar,' my love?"

"Come and hear him to-morrow."

"I will: I feel quite interested; and this is such an agreeable introduction to the king of beasts. But what are we to do next, Helen? We can't wait here all day. You are better acquainted with the habits of the animal: could you not venture to stir him up a little?"

"I'll try: Mr. Birkenshaw!"

He moved his head a little, as he might have done if a fly had tickled him, but gave no further sign of contact with the outer world. Yesterday and to-morrow kept him from realising to-day. Lady Romford was perplexed.

"Well, this is pleasant!" she whispered: "we are 'in a fix,' as Fred would say. Shall I try my powers? Perhaps a strange voice will rouse him up. Mr. Birkenshaw!"

Lion pricked up his ears: clear that the strange voice had gone deeper down into his being. Still no signs of recognition: the soul was yet in the inner world.

"Try again," said Helen: "he is stirring."

"Mr. Birkenshaw!"

"Presently," said the absent one at last.

"Two ladies wish to see you."

"Let them come in."

He had not looked up; and "presently" he was again buried in his own thoughts.

"Pray don't let him fall asleep again," whispered Lady Romford.

"I wish to introduce Lady Romford to you, sir," said Helen.

For the first time, Mr. Birkenshaw looked up; and, as soon as he saw two ladies standing before him, the instinct of a gentleman led him to rise.

Thereupon Lady Romford briefly stated their business: would he use his influence with highness, Prince Galeetzin, to procure an interview with Majesty?

Mr. Birkenshaw ill at ease again: had heard of the case from Rachel Randal; knew how shamefully Helen had treated Fred; could not conscientiously abet such behaviour.

But Helen Cameron did not love Frederick Randal, and could not honestly marry him.

The reverend gentleman could not understand how any Christian woman could prefer a heathen to a Christian.

But there were Christians—and Christians. Lady Romford had the misfortune of knowing Christians who were cross-grained, and Christians who were selfish.

Still that did not justify Helen Cameron in breaking her plighted word.

Certainly not; but there might be other things which did. And Lady Romford went on to give a true version of Helen's engagement with Frederick Randal.

Mr. Birkenshaw was very much moved. His first opinion on the case was certainly shaken. But he was puzzled, and resorted to his usual refuge in perplexity.

“Let us pray.”

Lady Romford saw the true man through all his oddities; the simple guileless nature which wished only to be led into the truth. She had never met such a man before, and was deeply interested. Mr. Birkenshaw rose every moment in her eyes.

They all knelt down together: and, while Mr. Birkenshaw prayed that God would guide them into the truth, Lady Romford could not help feeling that here was a man to whom prayer was a reality, and not a mere form; a man who lived very near to God, and always

found an open door between earth and heaven, and went in and out for fresh orders from his Master every day.

But, strange to say, for once in his life, prayer did not bring him any light.

"The Lord has hid his face from me," he said in a deep solemn undertone. "I must have sinned."

"Have you not allowed yourself to be prejudiced against Miss Cameron?" suggested Lady Romford slyly.

"I know not," answered Mr. Birkenshaw: "I must wrestle with God alone: peradventure he will vouchsafe an answer. Till then I cannot accede to your request."

Lady Romford rose to go, but seemed to linger awkwardly, as if she scarcely knew how to bring out something which she wanted to say. At length she said:

"You have no doubt many claims on your generosity, sir: will you allow me to write out a cheque?"

Mr. Birkenshaw's whole aspect was changed in a moment. He sternly asked:

"Do you think to bribe me, madam?"

"God forbid!" cried Lady Romford earnestly, seeing what a false step she had taken.

“I honour you too much to cherish such a thought in my heart.”

“Do you look on me, then, as a gipsy, or a conjuror, who cannot be approached without money?”

“Oh, Mr. Birkenshaw, you wrong me: indeed, you do!”

But he did not hear her: he was pursuing his own train of thought.

“You are like Saul, the son of Kish, who did not like at first to go to the man of God, because, as he said: ‘Behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God—what have we?’ But, when his servant answered that ‘he had the fourth part of a shekel of silver at hand,’ Saul eagerly cried out: ‘Well said; come, let us go!’ Madam, I am a poor man; and you are doubtless rich. But, if I believed that such a thought had entered your head, I would boldly say to you, as the Apostle Peter said to Simon the sorcerer: ‘Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.’”

“Believe me, sir, such an unworthy thought

never entered my brain. God has blessed me with wealth : I look on myself only as a steward of his gifts ; and I thought that you would help me to employ some of them to the best advantage."

"Not a farthing !" answered Mr. Birkenshaw emphatically : "I will not bias my judgment by a thought even of the widows and orphans whom I might relieve."

"I honour you for your resolve ; and I do not for a moment doubt that your decision will be just. But we must intrude no more on your precious time : I am almost ashamed to think, sir, that we have already taken up so much of it ; on a Saturday afternoon too !"

"No apology needed, madam : my doors are ever open to all who would consult me."

"But I fear we have interfered with your preparations for to-morrow, sir : and I had promised myself the pleasure of going to hear you preach ; a far greater pleasure than I had anticipated I am sure it will be, now that I have seen you and know your worth."

Mr. Birkenshaw never moved by flattery or even honest praise. He simply brushed all that aside, and answered gravely, as if to reassure Lady Romford :

“Madam, though I am not one who think it right to make no preparation for the pulpit, yet, when I have been hindered by lawful causes from making it, I have always found the truth of my Master’s gracious promise : ‘ It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak ; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.’ Therefore I have no fear for the morrow.”

Thereupon Lady Romford and Helen took their leave.

After their departure, Mr. Birkenshaw sat down to think, not of his sermon, but of Helen Cameron. He “wrestled with God alone,” as he himself had expressed it. Hour after hour, he sat and thought of the whole case, and yet seemed no nearer a settled judgment at the end of the process than at the beginning.

CHAPTER XIII.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

“Sweet are the uses of adversity ;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

SHAKSPERE : *As you like it.*

THE following morning Helen shrank from the thought of going to the Moravian Church. She would be sure to run the gauntlet through the whole congregation. Moreover Mr. Birkenshaw would most likely make some allusion to her in his sermon : “to point a moral,” if not to “adorn a tale.” Whenever anything remarkable happened, he thought it right to “improve the occasion.” A noble deed, a shocking crime ; a striking birth, a sudden death : all was grist for his mill, which he ground down into food for his flock.

But Helen felt that her distaste was cowardice disguised. Why not be a—woman ! She had made a mistake once : but latterly she had done her best to right it ; and why be ashamed to face the world ? Certainly not a pleasant thing to have one’s private doings

publicly discussed; but a clear conscience might enable one to bear it. Besides, she would have to face the world some time; and, the longer it was delayed, the harder it would be to bear. Every day she would have less courage: every day would both greaten her task and lessen her strength to do it. She therefore resolved, unpleasant as it was, to go to church that very day, and run the gauntlet.

During breakfast she was silent; thinking of the ordeal before her. Mr. Cameron too looked thoughtful, and spoke little. Was he thinking of the same thing? His manner toward Helen had changed since she avowed her love for Captain Maleenovsky. He looked sterner than of yore: as though to remind her that, though, for the sake of peace, he had yielded to the womenkind, he could never approve the step she took. But by the side of this sternness, indeed strangely blended with it, there was a tenderness in look and tone such as she had never noticed before: as though his heart yearned toward her and longed to save her from the consequences of her folly—ay, in spite of herself!

As he rose from breakfast this morning, he asked in a faltering tone:

"Are you going to church, Helen?"

"Certainly, papa: why not?"

Mr. Cameron walked twice across the room, and then asked in a low tone of voice, touching in its tenderness:

"Do you remember, darling, what took place once at church—the year before last?"

"I am not likely ever to forget it."

There was a pathos in Helen's tone which went straight to Mr. Cameron's heart.

"Are you prepared for a renewal of the scene in a still more unpleasant form?"

"Yes, papa."

Helen spoke quietly: Mr. Cameron could see that she was firm. She had counted the cost.

"God bless you, my darling!"

"I feel I have done right, papa; and I am not ashamed to own the deed."

"But the world——"

"Dear papa, it matters very little to me what the world may think of it."

Mr. Cameron took her into his arms, kissed her tenderly, and said:

"In spite of your faults, you are a noble girl! I am proud of my daughter."

"Thank you, dear papa."

They soon set off; and, when they arrived at the church, it was still so early, that several of the congregation were standing in groups in front of the building. From the constrained silence which fell on each group as they approached it, Helen had little doubt that they had been talking about *her*. She had always been in the habit of going from group to group, and joining in the talk. It would have been most marked if she had hurried into the church. She had therefore to begin "running the gauntlet" outside. It was but a foretaste of what awaited her within. If each of them had given her a blow with a rod as she passed, would the punishment have been more severe?

It was with flushed cheeks and throbbing heart that she entered the church. As she walked up the aisle behind her father, she felt that many eyes were fixed upon her. Her heart was so full, that she took no notice of anything till the service began. Lady Romford and Rachel Randal took their seats; Captain Alexeyev walked up the aisle, his everlasting sword clattering by his side;—without her seeing them. Nay, even when Sal sat down beside her, by her size and

bearing drawing almost as much attention as Alexeyev, she was not aware of it. Running the gauntlet was a harder punishment than she had fancied. However self-reliant we may be, it is a bitter thing to lose the esteem of those about us.

Helen was aroused out of herself by the tones of Mr. Birkenshaw's voice in prayer. Oh, that prayer! She never forgot it as long as she lived: it haunted her in after years thousands of miles away. It seemed to her as if it were offered up on her behalf. And so it was. Mr. Birkenshaw had never slept the night before: like the patriarch Jacob, he had been "wrestling with God alone" the whole of the live-long night. How he had brooded, with a strange yearning tenderness, with a Godlike pity and longing to save, over that lamb of his flock, who had wandered so far from the fold, and yet, in the midst of her wanderings, had been so brave, that prayer revealed. It was the prayer of a man who talked with God. Helen thought that it brought her into living contact with the Unseen. The world seemed to withdraw; and she was left alone with God.

And, from that moment, a deep calm settled

upon her soul. What to her were all those faces which had looked on her so coldly, and were even now perhaps masking thoughts which were bitter and hard? The great Searcher of hearts was there: He knew her heart. And, in the new-born strength with which that prayer was filling her, she lifted up her heart above. She appealed from pitiless men to a pitiful God; from the injustice of earth to the eternal justice of heaven. With a faith stronger than she had ever felt before, she entrusted her cause to Him who judgeth righteously. All around her were unfriendly faces. But what of that?

“Heaven is above all yet: there sits a judge
No tyrant can corrupt.”

Ay, *no* tyrant: whether king or mob. When the prayer was over, Helen felt that she could calmly face those whose injustice had stung her so keenly before.

When Mr. Birkenshaw gave out his text, indeed, she felt a sharp pang. Well, it was a strange text to choose at such a time: “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” Running the gauntlet! Helen felt that the hardest blows were coming now. Mr. Birkenshaw must have been aware that the

whole congregation knew of Helen's affair, and, whether he willed it or not, would fasten the text on her. And so they did: by a common instinct all eyes were fixed on her who had sworn to her hurt—and changed! Strange to say (strange, at least, they all thought it) Helen remained calm and unmoved. The new-born, prayer-born strength upheld her.

Sal perhaps was the only grown-up person in the whole congregation who did not at once see the application of the text to Helen. She was bewildered: could not make out what people meant by staring at Mr. Cameron's pew; thought them very rude, and very irreverent to boot. But, little by little, the truth dawned upon her. And then she herself became irreverent. In fact, she did not try to keep down her rising wrath. She bridled her tongue; but her hands proved more unmanageable. As Mr. Birkenshaw went on with his sermon, and enlarged on the baseness and wickedness of breaking one's plighted word, in a way which seemed to fasten the text on Helen, Sal found it hard indeed to keep from doubling her fists. She seriously pondered the feasibility of mounting the pulpit-steps,

and giving the preacher a hiding in the sight of his whole congregation. So stern was his rebuke, and so withering his scorn, that even Alexeyev, who, by this time, had been tamed into something like decorum in Rachel Randal's school, could not help whispering in her ears :

“ Reverence personal—eh ? ”

“ Hush ! ”

“ Mademoiselle catching it ! ”

Faster fell the blows on Helen's back. Many a nodding head thought : “ She deserves it all.” Running the gauntlet with a vengeance, indeed ! Lady Romford's eyes were dim : each stroke seemed to fall on her own back. Surely a punishment to her for going to a dissenting place of worship ! Wonderful to say, Helen remained calm : Mr. Birkenshaw's prayer had armed her against Mr. Birkenshaw's sermon.

Sal was becoming almost unmanageable. Twice or thrice, she half rose ; but Helen, knowing her “ gift ” in a certain “ line,” and seeing the twitching arms and hands, restrained her. Sal sat down again, but not to rest. With her keen eyes she was espying the shortest cut to the parson. Mr. Cameron's

pew was close to the pulpit : and two or three of *her* bounds would have brought her there. And then ? What a spectacle for angels and for men ! But Sal's purpose was stayed by a sudden change in Mr. Birkenshaw's tone.

There was one exception, he said, to the rule. If they had "sworn" to do what was *wrong* "to their own hurt," they were *not* to do it : they were to "change." They had no right to hurt their souls : their souls were not their own to swear away. If they had promised to be untrue to themselves, to live a life which would be an acted lie, let them break their word ! They had no right to bargain away their real selves. No amount of swearing could ever give any one else a right to their souls. No bargain of that sort could ever stand good : whatever the judgment might be in earth's hide-bound Courts of Common Law, it would be annulled in heaven's High Court of Chancery. And, therefore, if, to get out of a false position and become true to themselves, they were forced to withdraw their given pledge, and thus incurred ill-will on earth, let them not care for it too much. Opinion of the world a small matter : opinion of one's conscience, opinion of one's God, the

great thing. First and foremost, let them be true to themselves, to their inner sense of right, to the law which God had written in their hearts; and then they might go through the world erect, with a face that looked upward, with God for their guardian and conscience for their shield.

Mr. Birkenshaw spoke like one inspired. His dull grey eyes flashed with a light which looked weird and unearthly: his heavy face lit up with a fire which threatened to burn up all falseness in his way. I have more than once seen a man, who seemed dull and commonplace in private, suddenly grow eloquent in the pulpit. But Lady Romford had never seen such a phenomenon before: and she was astounded. She sat listening with open mouth. Her tears had dried up: she thought she was listening to the most masterly vindication of Helen. How Mr. Birkenshaw had managed to rid himself of the narrow prejudices he had cherished the day before she could not understand. The "wrestling with God alone" had indeed done wonders!

But the shock which these words gave to the larger part of Mr. Birkenshaw's hearers! While they were wisely nodding their heads,

congratulating themselves on the fact that their minister was powerfully endorsing their narrow misjudgment, it was tantalizing to be suddenly jerked back and thrown on their haunches. Still they had so much reverence for their pastor, and he spoke with so much authority and power, that his sermon changed public opinion in Helen's world.

As for Helen, she was touched to the core of her being. When Lady Romford's tears began to dry, her own began to flow. Here was a man who understood her: understood her as no one else, not even Lady Romford, had understood her before. And this was the man who had so misjudged her the day before. She was thankful, deeply thankful. It was not merely that he had nobly defended her; but he had cleared up her own moral perceptions, and strengthened her resolve not to swerve from the path she had marked out for herself. The comfort, the courage, the strength, which his words gave her! She received them as a message from God, and wondered greatly that she had never before detected the power of healing there was in this man.

When the service was over, Mr. Birkenshaw, instead of going straight to the vestry, walked

up to Mr. Cameron's pew. Wonderment fell on the congregation. What next? This next: he shook hands warmly with Helen. What did it mean? This: during the week, while still misjudging her case, he had spoken harshly about her to more than one; and this was his way of making a public acknowledgment of his error, and a public atonement for the wrong. Let them all see what he thought of her now!

"God bless you!" he said tenderly: "I will call on Prince Galeetzin to-morrow."

Such an example, set by a leader of men, is always catching; and Helen found the social atmosphere some degrees warmer.

Once outside the church, Captain Alexeyev took possession of her. Helen thankfully accepted his arm because she was longing to speak to him.

"How is he?" she asked.

Alexeyev racked his brain to find out of whom Helen was speaking. You will remember that he knew nothing of her love. After some guessing he concluded that she was speaking of the Emperor, who had stood up for her so generously at Princess Donskaya's ball.

"Very well," he answered.

"You have seen him then?"

"See him every day."

"What a noble friend!"

"Eh?"

"God bless you for your loyalty!"

Alexeyev felt bewildered. Not much loyalty in seeing Majesty every day: being aide-de-camp in waiting, how could he help it? What need of such praise? Hah! Mademoiselle touched with that majesty-mania which had set in since the day of the revolt? Majesty "the handsomest man in Europe:" scores of ladies ready to fall in love with him. Mademoiselle one of them?

While these thoughts passed through his mind, he answered in his easy manner:

"An honour to serve him."

"Could I see him?"

"Uncommonly cool!" thought Alexeyev: "more knowing than I thought." Then aloud he said: "Can't say: hundreds of pretty girls in love with him; all dying to see him. Lots of applications like yours."

A sudden pang shot through Helen's heart: what if his love were a mere passing whim?

"Tell him that I do not forget him," she said earnestly.

“Coming it strong!” thought Alexeyev:
 “ready to jump into Majesty’s arms!”

“He must be sad at times: all alone!”

“Here is a mess!” thought Alexeyev:
 “put my foot into it this time, any how?”

“Is he downhearted when you see him?”

A direct question: bound to answer. And yet how to answer it? He had but to plunge deeper and deeper into the mire.

“Not particularly,” he said at hap-hazard.

“He has a noble soul, which sustains him.”

“Yes, noble soul always sustains one,” answered Alexeyev.

Those general propositions: so handy at a pinch!

“When could I see him?”

A question not to be staved off by general propositions: forced to acknowledge his bewilderment at last.

“See Majesty?”

“His Majesty!” cried Helen horror-struck:
 “I was speaking of your friend Captain Maleenovsky.”

“Wheugh!”

A new light dawned on Captain Alexeyev: mademoiselle in love with Captain Maleenov-

sky! Strange that he had never thought of that before! Many things now came back to his memory; her conversation in the ball-room, her fainting at the sight of Captain Maleenovsky.

"How could you have misunderstood me?"

"Mentioned no names: naturally thought mademoiselle spoke of Majesty. See him every day. Blockhead that I was!"

"And how is Captain Maleenovsky?"

"Could lead you another wild-goose chase. But to say honestly: don't know."

"Have you not seen him, then?"

"No."

"Oh, Captain Alexeyev! A noble friend, indeed!"

"Asked Majesty's leave: no go!"

"A true friend would have resigned his post!"

"Just what I have done: await Majesty's answer."

"I beg your pardon," said Helen warmly. "I have wronged you; forgive me, Captain Alexeyev!"

By this time they had arrived at Mr. Cameron's house; and the conversation was cut short.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CELL.

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage :
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.”

LOVELACE.

A DARK narrow cell in the fortress of St. Petersburg ; bare stone walls, pierced on one side by a narrow slit which served for a window ; a stone bench, to sit on by day and lie on by night ; scanty prison fare of the coarsest kind : these were the things which Captain Maleenovsky had earned for himself by joining the *Union*. He had brought his eggs to a fine market !

Now that all was over, he was not one to whine over the past. What was done could not be undone ; and crying over spilt milk would not restore it to the jug. With his eyes open he had joined the undertaking ; and, now that it had failed, he must bear his punishment like a man. Perhaps there was not one of all the prisoners in the fortress, not even Count Golovin, who kept up his spirits

better. His strong will preserved him from despair.

Not that he had not his moments of weakness. To a man brought up to luxury, the bare stone walls, the hard couch, the coarse prison fare, were hard to bear. To a man of his active habits, the want of work, of air and exercise, was harder still. To a man of his social disposition, the utter loneliness was hardest of all: the very jailer, who brought him his food, being forbidden to speak to him. The future, too, was very dark: "Siberia or the scaffold" loomed before him.

He had now been many days in that cell: all that time, no human face, barring his dumb jailer, had greeted him. He looked pale, haggard, and worn. Forced upon itself, his mind had taken a more ideal turn than of yore. Visions floated before him: visions of what had been, and what might have been. Did one particular vision cross his path? A vision of beauty; a vision of love? That life, which was now so dark and dreary, might it not have been bright and blessed? If he had only thought of himself more than of others!

One thing lay heavy on his heart: not one of his friends had visited him in his cell! No

means of knowing what was going on in the outer world: not one item of news had he heard since his arrest. What meant that silence, that utter desertion? Say all others had forsaken him, what of Alexeyev? Rat deserting sinking ship? It cut him to the heart: he would sit for hours brooding over the thought. What with his ugly wound, enforced idleness, and want of fresh air, the curse of sleeplessness fell on him. The days were dreary enough; but the nights were drearier still. Neither candle nor lamp; and, in the utter darkness of those long winter nights, there was nothing to divert his thoughts from the grief within.

One morning, after a sleepless night, he sat on the bench, as he often did, with his elbows resting on his knees and his face buried in his hands. What was life that he should bewail it? To him it had latterly been nothing but a series of troubles and losses. And yet, with all its woes, life was dear. He was a shrewd observer of human nature who said: "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." With all the strength of youth Malecnovsky shrank from the thought of a sudden death. Yet what else had he before him?

While he sat thus the door opened ; and the jailer came in and laid his breakfast down on the bench beside him. But Maleenovsky took no notice of the man. After a while hunger came ; and he almost mechanically swallowed the coarse food. It was very lonely and very drear. He had heard of rats amusing prisoners ; but, whether he were a marked man, or whether the cats of the establishment did their duty too well, none ever visited him. Well, one *might* have something worse than rats.

Presently the door opened again ; and two gentlemen entered the cell. Here was company enough for the lonely prisoner ! But Maleenovsky was so absorbed in his thoughts that he neither saw nor heard. An imperious call aroused him ; and, uncovering his face, he recognised—PRINCE BORIATINSKY. Expression of artificial face boded no good to prisoner. But what little hope there might have been was dashed to the ground by the sight of his companion : Mr. Kokoshkin, late judge of the Provincial Government Court at Novgorod, now promoted to be judge of Supreme Court at St. Petersburg. *He* had brought his eggs to quite another market !

What meant these worthies in the cell ?

Come to crow over their ancient foe and prey? Maleenovsky looked at them gloomily. He had longed for companionship: craving answered with a vengeance! Would not the rats have been better company?

“Stand up!” said highness in an imperious tone: “do you mean to insult us by that posture?”

“The insolence of these rebels!” exclaimed Mr. Kokoshkin.

Captain Maleenovsky rose; and the two worthies seated themselves on the bench.

“His Imperial Majesty has graciously condescended to appoint us to the ‘Commission of Inquiry’ which has been selected to investigate the late revolt,” continued highness pompously: “and we have come to examine you.”

“His highness speaks like an oracle,” added Mr. Kokoshkin.

Maleenovsky bowed slightly, but did not utter a word. He was amused at the contrast between the insolence of the one and the fawning servility of the other.

“Why do you not respond?” exclaimed highness in a tone of irritation.

“I have heard no question,” answered Maleenovsky.

“If you honestly confess all that you know about the proceedings of the *Union of the Public Good*, we have his Imperial Majesty’s authority for declaring that you will be dealt with mercifully,” continued highness.

Captain Maleenovsky reflected for a moment. Life still dear to him : nay, something dearer even than life ? Achievable yet ? But only for a moment : he flung the base thought away from him. “Get thee behind me, Satanas !”

“I have no confession to make,” he answered calmly.

“Then we abandon you to the vindictive justice of the law !” exclaimed highness.

“Ay, the justice of the law.”

“Have you considered that the penalty of your crime is death ?” asked the prince.

“Ay, DEATH !”

“I know.”

“And not a common death, either ; but to be hung, drawn, and quartered.”

Mr. Kokoshkin varied his echo this time, and fancied he was saying a witty thing in adding :

“No quarter given, but all taken—from your person.”

“I am prepared,” said Maleenovsky.

Highness had expected to see his old enemy tremble before him; and he was very much ruffled by the calmness of his demeanour.

“You fancy you are going to baffle us by bravado—do you?” he cried angrily. “You deceive yourself: we shall extort a confession from you. Who induced you to join the *Union*?”

“I decline to say.”

This answer heightened Prince Boriatinsky’s rage. He became livid, and shouted out :

“We shall soon find a way to unloose your tongue.”

What did he mean? Torture? The rack? Possible! Maleenovsky felt sure that Majesty would not sanction it. But highness on his own responsibility? Clearly possible! At the dastardly threat all the manhood in him rose to defy it.

“Do your worst!” he said.

He had answered so quickly that Mr. Koshkin’s echo clashed with his words :

“Ay, we shall find a way.”

The effect was ludicrous; and, yet, strange to say, the parrot-like echo of worthy judge irritated gallant captain more than the fierce bluster of highness.

“Find it, then, gentlemen,” he said; “and don’t talk about it. You are wasting your breath.”

Highness was so enraged that he was speechless; and for once Mr. Kokoshkin took the lead.

“*You* are wasting our time,” he retorted.

“It may save your time, gentlemen,” answered Maleenovsky, smiling, “if you could understand that what I once decline to answer, no power on earth shall wring out of me.”

“What led you to join the *Union*?” continued the prince, foaming with rage.

A funny smile passed over Captain Maleenovsky’s face, as he said:

“I was led to think of the need of reform, by the corruption and injustice of Mr. Kokoshkin as a judge.”

“Me!” exclaimed worthy judge.

He started as if he had been shot.

“Yes, you!” answered Maleenovsky; “and I hope, gentlemen, you will report my answer to his Majesty.”

Many other questions were asked, and answered in the same manner. At length, the two commissioners rose to go. The last words which highness uttered were:

“Since you obstinately reject his Majesty’s proffered mercy, we leave you—to die !”

Words duly echoed by Mr. Kokoshkin.

When the two worthies were gone, Maleenovsky again sat down on the bench, and buried his face in his hands. His last chance of life gone ! When or how death would come, whether there would be a public execution or only a private strangulation, he did not know. One thing only he felt sure of : that he was doomed to die ! He would not have been surprised to see the hangman enter the next minute, to shove him secretly out of a world in which he had known so much sorrow. He tried to collect his scattered thoughts, that he might not be wholly unprepared to die. His loneliness would help him in that, if in nothing else.

Loneliness ? Not a bit of it : all Petersburg to be let loose on him that day ? Who was that ? The hangman ? Very unlike a hangman ! Could he believe his own eyes ? Yes, if he could trust their testimony, there stood Helen Cameron before him : the same, and yet not the same, as when first he saw her at the Feast of the Jordan. The same wonderful beauty ; but no longer out of keeping with itself. The same grand figure ; but no longer

matched with a babyish face. The same lovely face too ; but no longer babyish, nay, ripened into a strong, mellow, womanly face. A woman for a stricken hero to lean on : such a beaming, sunshiny, cloudless face ; such a strong, dauntless, all-conquering figure !

Beside her stood a stately lady, whom he did not know. But he had no room for her in his eye : Helen Cameron filled his vision. His heart seemed to jump into his throat ; and it was one of the hardest things he had ever done to stifle a cry of delight. But, by a strong effort of will, he mastered himself, and remained outwardly calm—and cold.

Helen walked straight up to him : no embarrassment ; no faltering in her steps ; not a blush, not a trace of that coy shrinking with which she was wont to accost him. Unmaidenly ? O brothers, O sisters, had he not fallen ? Was he not wounded in the battle of life ? Did he not need her help ?

“You here, mademoiselle ?”

Oh, so cold !

“I have come to tell you that I love you,” said Helen ; “that I am yours for ever, that nothing shall part us.”

Unmaidenly ? Be it so : let us come to an

understanding to call it so ; and let us of the harder sex go on our way rejoicing that there be such unmaidenly maidens in this world of ours, to uplift the fallen.

Maleenovsky's eyes grew dim. Was it in human power to refrain from clasping her to his heart ? He did refrain ; but it was the hardest struggle he ever underwent. His voice trembled as he spoke ; but, barring that, he still seemed calm and cold.

“But reflect, mademoiselle——” he began.

“I *have* reflected ; and I see as clearly as if your heart lay open before me that you love me, and that it is only because you were too noble to involve me in your ruined fortunes that you never pressed your love.”

Could he gainsay her ? He could only say :

“I beseech you to pause, mademoiselle.”

“There was a time when I thought your conduct strange. But I see it all now : I see how nobly, how heroically, you have acted from first to last.”

It was not in human nature to hold out much longer. But Captain Maleenovsky battled with himself to the very last. Still he was clearly shaken : even his outward calmness was giving way ; and his voice quivered so

much, that he could scarcely bring out the words which followed.

“You surely forget that my life is doomed.”

“I do *not* forget it. If it should be so, it will be my joy to stand by your side to the last: and then—not to bewail you with idle tears, but to triumph in your death as the most glorious of all—death for your fatherland in the midst of defeat and shame.”

“Great God! What can I do?” exclaimed Captain Maleenovsky, gulping down an incipient sob. “What can I say? How turn her from her purpose?”

“But I think it will not come to that,” continued Helen: “I have seen the Emperor; and I hope that some milder doom will be yours. Do you remember once telling me that the bar between us was a ‘crime’ which involved ‘Siberia or the scaffold?’ Little did I dream then what your crime was. A crime! If such be your crimes, I should like to know what your *virtues* are like.” And Helen could not help smiling, “A crime! Happy the land, in which such criminals abound! Happy the land, whose sons are not swallowed up in selfishness and sloth! A crime! Why, even my father says it was heroic. I remind you

of this to point you to the alternative. I think it will be 'Siberia,' and *not* 'the scaffold.' "

What had come over Helen Cameron? She was intensely in earnest; and yet she talked quite cheerfully, and even with an air of triumph. Was this the girl who seemed quite crushed some days before?

"God grant it!" exclaimed Lady Romford.

These were the first words she had spoken as yet.

"If so," continued Helen, "it will be my pride to share your exile, and try to make it bearable for you." Then she added in English: " 'Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die; and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.' "

Poor Captain Maleenovsky had quite broken down at last. However he just managed to say:

"And your father?"

"Has given his consent. This lady, Lady Romford, my dear mother that is to be, will take care of him."

Maleenovsky was sobbing aloud: for the first time since his father died. Was it in the power of man to hold out any longer? At any rate, *he* could not. He rose, could scarcely stand, and fairly staggered into her arms; and the two were locked in a dumb though passionate embrace. Did they think of the scene which took place when he rescued her from the flood? How much deeper and stronger their love now! With the awful shadow of death resting upon them, they silently exchanged their vows for eternity rather than for time. It was the solemn betrothal of spirit to spirit, immortal to immortal.

Lady Romford looked on, and mingled her tears with theirs. But her presence was unfelt: the two were all in all to one another. If all Petersburg had been let loose upon them, it would have been the same. Think you they knew that they were in a prison-cell? Why, they were in Elysium. Think you they knew that they could not sit down save on a stone bench? Why, they were borne aloft as on angel-wings. No need for words to utter their thoughts: spirit talked to spirit in a spirit-tongue. Lips met lips: eyes looked into eyes: and spirit touched spirit.

CHAPTER XV.

WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

“ Duke. What comfort do you find in being so calm ?

*Candido. That which green wounds receive from sovereign balm.
Patience, my lord, why it is the soul of peace :
Of all the virtues 'tis nearest kin to heaven ;
It makes men look like gods. The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer ;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.”*

DECKER.

It was all very well for Helen to hope that a milder doom than death would be allotted to Maleenovsky and his fellow-conspirators. The Petersburgers generally were not so sanguine.

Large wagers were laid on the issue ; and the “ quotation ” in the betting-market was ten to one against her. The “ favourite ” was : “ Verdict, guilty ; sentence, death.” Alas for Helen and her hopes !

Months had passed away since the outbreak ; and it was now the height of summer. During those months Helen was by no means idle. The most active schemer could scarcely have surpassed her in the energy with which she tried to bring about a favourable issue.

Her character had been slowly unfolding

ever since we first saw her; but, within the last four months, it had taken a stride which might well have surprised those who knew her best. Here was the secret: once she had lived for herself; but now she lived for another. So the gay, light-hearted, thoughtless girl had been turned into the serious, earnest, devoted woman. The one great aim which she now set before her made her life assume a noble shape. No more weakness henceforth; no more wavering or faltering. She went straight toward her mark, as the arrow to its target.

As the days wore on, a buzz of expectation ran through society. The public was not admitted to the High Court of Justice; but the *St. Petersburg Journal* was to record the issue. Helen had suddenly become a great newspaper reader: Sal could not understand it at first; and, when she guessed the cause, she did not know what to do. If she could have read Russ herself, she might have been able to break the shock. Once she hid the paper; but Helen was so vexed, that she never repeated the experiment. So all she could do was to sit and watch Helen as she read, and gather from her face what the news

might be. It was quite a sight to see the two when thus employed: the eagerness with which Helen studied the paper matched by the eagerness with which Sal studied Helen.

One morning, after breakfast, Helen and Sal sat in the breakfast-room. It was the day when the *St. Petersburg Journal* came out. But it had not been brought yet. Had the paper been eagerly bought up because it contained the verdict? Helen was fidgety; unlike her latter self. Was she going to give way at last? Presently Natalia came in with the paper. Helen seized it, and eagerly searched the contents. Sal watched her face as if the fate of the empire hung on that tell-tale. For some time she could see no change. But by-and-by Helen grew pale, deadly pale; and there was a nervous twitching in her lips which showed that there were news indeed. Sal could not say what. If death, would not Helen have fainted, or burst into tears? If life, would she not have uttered a cry of joy? But that paleness and that nervous twitching of the lips? The tell-tale did not tell the tale. In an agony of suspense Sal asked for the news. She never could forget the tone in which Helen answered:

“Verdict, guilty; sentence, death!”

Sal burst into tears, and, the next moment, was on her knees before Helen, trying, as she thought, to comfort the stricken girl. She could not understand the calmness with which Helen bore the news. Was it strength? or was it despair?

“Oh, miss, dear miss!” cried Sal, sobbing: “may God help ye, and comfort ye!”

“He will, dear Sal,” answered Helen quietly. “I must not give way now: I need all my strength to support *him*.”

“Oh, miss, ye’d be a rare ’un for a champing: ye takes it so easy like!”

“Let us go to the fortress at once.”

And they went to dress. As they passed the hall on their return, they met Lady Romford at the door. She gazed wistfully at Helen, to see if she had heard the dreadful news. Surely not: how to break it to her?

“My darling!” she cried, folding the girl to her heart: “may God bless you!”

And Helen fell on her neck, and burst into tears. Better so: more healthy; more natural. The attempt at stoical hardness had been overstrained, and would have led to weakness in the long run. Feelings better have a vent!

Lady Romford understood it all now : she did not say a word, but only pressed Helen the closer. Helen had had her cry ; and she would be all the better for it in her interview with Captain Maleenovsky. She repeated what she had said to Sal :

“ I must not give way now : I shall need all my strength to support *him*.”

“ Quite right.”

“ Dear mamma, you must strengthen me, and help to make me brave,” continued Helen.

“ God will strengthen you, my darling,” answered Lady Romford, kissing her. “ *Will*, do I say ? Why He *has* done it. You put me to the blush. Oh, if God had been pleased to give me a daughter like you, should I not have been proud of her ?”

“ She be wonderful !” cried Sal. “ I can knock down a body : but I be as weak as a babby when I be knocked down mysen’.”

The Emperor had given Helen an order which admitted her to the fortress at all times ; therefore she had no difficulty in reaching Captain Maleenovsky’s cell.

He was greatly changed since we saw him last : no longer pale and haggard ; looking

more like his old self than he had done for many a day, only brighter and more cheerful than he had ever looked before. Helen had certainly done wonders for him. Though she had failed to save him from the doom of death, her efforts had not been thrown away. His lot had been lightened in many ways. A table and two chairs had been added to the scanty furniture of his cell. Books, pen, ink, and paper, had been supplied to him.

He sat at the table reading, when Helen and Sal came in. As soon as he saw them, his face brightened: he flung the book on the table, sprang up from his chair, and rushed forward with open arms. When the greetings were over, he seated Helen by his side; and Helen, who saw that he had not heard the news, began to make slow approaches to the theme.

"Our meetings have been very pleasant," she said.

"Thanks to my guardian angel."

"Let us rather thank Him who has arranged it all, dear Alexander," was Helen's reply.

They spoke in English. Captain Malceovsky had greatly improved his knowledge of

that language. Helen had been his teacher ; and very few Englishmen could have detected from his speech that he was a foreigner.

“I should not mind living in prison for ever, if these meetings were to last.”

Poor Captain Maleenovsky spoke enthusiastically.

“I fear they will not last, dear.”

But the captain was too much absorbed in his own thoughts to take in the full meaning of what Helen said. He went on to say, in a gentle undertone :

“Do you remember telling me once, dear Helen, that nature had cut me out for a scholar, and my maintaining that she had destined me to be a man of action ?”

“Very well.”

“Do you know, darling, I begin to think that you were right, as you always are.”

“Why ?”

“I take such delight in my studies,” answered Maleenovsky simply ; “and it is such a joy to look forward to the prospect of talking them over with you.”

Helen smiled. How hard the task to undeceive him ; to wake him out of his pretty little day-dream ! Sal, who sat on the bench

within earshot, felt her eyes grow dim. But Helen was calm and self-possessed.

"Ah, my darling Alexander, it will be hard for us to part!" she said gently.

And she threw her arm round his neck.

"Part!" he cried: "who talks of parting?"

"I fear we must—and soon."

He threw his arms round her, and held her fast, as if thus he could keep her ever at his side. So many months had slipped away since he was arrested, and the time had passed so happily, that he had almost forgotten the doom of death which was hanging over him.

"What has happened?"

"The High Court of Justice has pronounced sentence."

"Well?"

An awful gasp of suspense.

"It is not so mild as I hoped."

"Death?"

"Yes, my dearest."

"Oh, my God!"

And the strong man dropped his head on Helen's shoulder, and sobbed aloud. It was awful to see him: his whole frame shook. Sal sobbed in sympathy. But Helen remained

wonderfully calm. She allowed the first paroxysm of grief to exhaust itself before she tried to speak. She merely clasped him tight, and caressed him tenderly. At length, she spoke.

“My own for ever!” she said: “what is death to you and me? We have learnt a higher lesson.”

“It was not the fear of death: it was the thought of parting from you that overcame me.”

“Death cannot part us,” said Helen softly: “we are one now; one for ever!”

Captain Maleenovsky made a strong effort, and mastered himself.

“Forgive my weakness,” he said: “the flesh will quiver when the red-hot iron sears.”

“Nay, it is not weakness,” answered Helen.

“When I look at your heroic courage, I am ashamed of myself,” continued Captain Maleenovsky. “Who could have thought a year ago that I should be so weak, and you so strong; that I should be the supported, and you the supporter?”

“Ah, dear Alexander, God has taught me much since then.”

“And you have taught me more. When I

think of all that you have been to me the last few months, my own Helen—— But I must not think of that: it will drive me mad. Helen, darling, pray with me.”

It was a strange new power which had been unfolded in Helen within the last few months: that power of prayer. It was a wonderful gift in its way: simple to the very verge of childishness; but earnest and eloquent, and always going right to the heart of the matter. Sorrow had led this child to understand and love the great Father.

And those three knelt down on the bare stone floor of that narrow cell; and Helen became the interpreter of their needs to the All-hearing One. Was he not as near to them as to the largest gathering in the grandest cathedral? When they rose from their knees, Maleenovsky felt a load taken off his heart. When Helen left the cell, he had become quite cheerful.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

“The maddest storm doth lay itself at last;
Day follows night, the late fruit ripens:
And then—one moment swallows up a life!”

SCHILLER: *Maid of Orleans.*

THE next few days wore on wearily. Helen felt sick at heart; but she bore up wonderfully. Indeed, her calmness amazed all who saw her. “I must not give way now; I need all my strength to support *him*.” there was the key to her demeanour. When the tragedy was over, she might indulge her grief: not now! Why had God restored him to her, after so many months of sorrow and seeming estrangement, but that she might tend him in his last days, and lighten his doom? She visited him every day, and did support him by her courage: less a lover than a brave and noble wife.

Lady Romford came to see her every day, and comforted her not a little; and, for once in his life, Mr. Cameron sadly neglected his business for his daughter’s sake. But Sal was with her most of the time; went with her to the fortress, sat with her in her room. A

hushed and awe-struck look had come over her face; and her big, unwieldy figure seemed to be toned down, and to move about with strangely modulated ease. If you can fancy an elephant behaving like a well-trained spaniel, you can picture to yourselves the Sal Willing of those few days. A wonderfully quiet, subdued, and chastened Sal!

Early one morning after breakfast, Captain Alexeyev came in. Helen had not seen him since the sentence of death was pronounced. She scarcely wondered at it: easy temperament, taking everything lightly! One glance at his handsome face, as he came in, enough to shatter the heresy! A nature not easily moved; but with one fixed principle in it at least—faithfulness to friendship. Quivering lip, trembling hand, silent tongue, all told the same tale. He walked up to Helen without a word: gay chatterer, dumb! Helen held out her hand; and he silently kissed it. At length he tried to speak, but broke into a tempest of sobs. Helen spoke a few kind words which seemed to brace him up.

“Been in the country for more than a week,” he said at length: “just arrived; just heard of it! How is he?”

“He bears it nobly.”

“What must he think of me? A fellow who, but for him, would have been in prison scores of times!”

And Alexeyev sobbed aloud.

“I have explained it all to him: he understands you thoroughly.”

“Oh, mademoiselle, *you* never can understand what a friend he has been to me! The truest, bravest, noblest——”

But here gallant captain broke down again.

“I’ll tell him what you say,” answered Helen: “I shall see him this morning.”

“Forgive me, mademoiselle: *must* go. Just arrived: not seen Majesty yet; resolved to see *you* first. Mean to tell Majesty that I can no longer serve him if——”

Another break down: all the sprightliness and banter knocked out of him.

“I’ll tell him that too.”

“No, mademoiselle, don’t. If Majesty won’t listen, will be a free man to-day, and see him myself. *Au revoir*. *Must* go: Majesty wondering why I don’t come, and all that. My love to *him*. Farewell!”

“God bless you,” said Helen: “*he* understands you; and I understand you.”

All this time Sal sat so quietly in the room that Captain Alexeyev did not even notice her. She had come to know enough of French to understand the tenor of the conversation ; and gallant captain's tell-tale face and manner had supplied a striking commentary. During her many visits to the fortress, she had learnt to love Captain Maleenovsky for his own sake, as well as for Helen's ; and the faithful devotion of the gay young officer, whom she had hitherto looked upon as somewhat shallow and heartless, touched her deeply. So, as he turned to go, she quietly overtook him, and, as an atonement for her former injustice, gave his delicate little hand a squeeze which he did not soon forget.

The hour for visiting the fortress had not yet arrived ; and this was always the most trying time of the day for Helen. But, soon after Captain Alexeyev went, Natalia brought in the *St. Petersburg Journal* ; and, to while away the time, Helen took it up, and began to read it listlessly. For the last time, though : having ceased to take an interest in politics, she had countermanded the paper ; and this was the last number that was to be sent. Sal, too, had ceased to watch her face as she read

it. A pity ; for, at this time, she would have seen something in that face to interest her. The listlessness was gone ; and Helen seemed absorbed in the paper. After a while, she said :

“What will you give for the news this time, Sal ?”

“A flash five pun’ note,” answered Sal without looking up : “I begs your pardon, miss.”

It was the most flippant answer which Sal had given for many a day. Helen’s question had provoked it : still she was sorry that she had not bridled her tongue. There was intense earnestness in Helen’s tone as she answered :

“Ah, Sal, you have been so true a friend to me, that I am sure you would give all you have for this piece of news.”

Sal looked up at last, and saw Helen’s lovely face beaming with joy. The eyes were moist ; but, oh, the glow, the radiance, the sunshine bursting through the cloud !

“Well, what is it, miss ?”

Helen gave a free English translation of what she had just read in the paper. It amounted to this : That Majesty, “out of his

glorious clemency," had commanded the High Court of Justice to revise the sentence lately passed on the "conspirators," and to "discriminate between different degrees of guilt;" that thereupon the Court, while leaving the most guilty to die, had commuted the sentence of by far the larger number, among whom was Captain Maleenovsky, to Siberian exile.

Sal leapt up, and rushed to Helen. She scarcely knew what she did, she was so beside herself with joy. Strange, too! Joy that a friend should be allowed to spend his life in Siberia! Now, joy was a severer test of her outward demeanour than grief. Sal was herself again: the old awkward, ungainly, boisterous Sal!

"What would you give for this piece of news, Sal?" asked Helen triumphantly.

"Oh, miss, I'd live with Missus W. for iver, and let her knock me down a dozen times a day, and niver touch her oncet," answered Sal enthusiastically.

"Let us go to the fortress."

Sal reflected a moment, and said:

"I s'poses ye'll be for follerin' 'un to Sibe-riar, miss?"

"Certainly."

“How d’ye git theere?”

“There are post horses all the way.”

Sal reflected still longer : clearly something brewing in her “in’ards.”

“D’ye think, miss, as I’d be o’ hany use to ye, out theere?”

“Oh, Sal !”

“D’ye think as I’d be worth my weight?” continued Sal gravely : “I be a heavy harticle to carry ; and perhaps they’d charge hextra by post.”

“You would be worth your weight in gold ; but you don’t know what lies before you there.”

“Well, I doesn’t, miss : that be flat—as flat’s this yere table. I s’poses there be savages theere ; but they can’t be wuss nor them South-Sea Highlanders as I heerd a mish’nary talk on oncet at our chapel in Hull. Cannon-balls he call ’em. ’Cause why? I s’pose they knocks ye down before they eats ye hup. But then, ye sees, miss, two can play at that ’ere geeam ; and yere be a peer o’ fists as ’ll do a purty considerable deal o’ damage afore they can git at me. And, if they do munch one, they’ll find one rayther tough to swallow—that’s all ! And p’raps, too, one might git a

chance o' lickin' their in'ards, if as how it coom to that. I b'lieves ye!"

Helen laughed once more.

"Oh, Sal, you surely would not carry your vengeance so far!" she said.

"'Ouldn't I? Jist about it! And then, ye sees, miss, if hany on them 'ere cannon-balls coom at you, I be the gal to knock 'em down afore they can git at ye."

Little did either of them know how soon Sal's pugilistic genius would be called into play on Helen's behalf. Helen was deeply touched by Sal's devotion. For the first time in her life she threw her arms round Sal's neck, and kissed her.

"You are a noble girl!" she exclaimed: "I love you, Sal."

"Oh, miss," said Sal, "if ye'll only kiss me hivery time I knocks down a cannon-ball, I'll knock down half a dozen on 'em at oncet."

"If I approve of your knocking them down," answered Helen, smiling through her tears.

"Niver ye fear, miss," rejoined Sal ironically: "I'll let 'em knock ye down and eat ye too, if so be ye be squeamish about it. It be a bargain then?"

"But what will your father say?"

“Fayther, he’ll say as a sweet young leddy like yoursen’ ought to have a biggish body like me to stand atween her and them cannon-balls. Why, miss, fayther’d knock me down hissen, if he thought I’d deserted ye at sich a time as this. Fayther, he worship the very ground ye treds on—he do !”

“Well, Sal,” said Helen, “I can’t deny that you would be the greatest comfort to me.”

“’Ould I ?” cried Sal eagerly, her big face broadening into a grin of satisfaction. “Well, then, it *be* a bargain, miss : and I be off for the cannon-balls !”

And the two went to the fortress.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOEY WILLING TURNS UP AGAIN.

"1st Watchman. We charge you in the prince's name, stand.

2nd Watch. Call up the right, master constable: we have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in the commonwealth.

1st Watch. And one Deformed is one of them: I know him; a wears a lock.

Conrade. Masters, masters.

* * * * *

1st Watch. Never speak: we charge you, let us obey you to go with us."

SHAKSPERE: *Much Ado about Nothing.*

HELEN usually drove to the fortress; and, on their return, as they were entering the courtyard of Mr. Cameron's house, Sal, without a word of explanation, suddenly jumped down while the carriage was still in motion, and ran off into the street. The ill-regulated girl! Helen had by this time become so accustomed to Sal's oddities, that she did not think much of the strange prank, and went straight into the house.

The fact is, that Sal had sighted a big, burly figure, in sailor's attire, waddling up Pea Street toward Mr. Cameron's house. No need to tell Sal that its owner was her father.

Figure recognisable from a distance: not many like it in the world! Huge, elephantine, and unwieldy in its movements, it rolled rather than walked along the street, drawing all eyes to itself. Under the right arm was a large brown paper parcel, and in the mouth a lighted cigar. Sal bounded down the street; but, before she could reach it, elephantine figure had come to grief—was in fact sprawling on the ground. Poor Sal! She naturally came to the conclusion:

“The hegg be haddled; the purpis gone to the dogs! Poor fayther! How grieved Miss Helen’ll be!”

Captain Willing had just arrived. How he longed to see “his Sal!” So full was he of the thought, that he forgot all about his lighted cigar. Happily he had met no policeman by the way: otherwise he would have licked the dust before now. Well, he was very near his haven: another minute, and his huge carcass would be safe on Mr. Cameron’s premises. But, as ill-luck would have it, two highly-inconvenient members of the order-keeping force had sighted him before Sal. They strode up to him, and in no gentle tone ordered him to put away his cigar. Joey, knowing nothing

of Russ, of course did not understand the order, and smoked on.

"Hany think I can do for ye, gintlemen?" he asked, knocking the ashes off his cigar.

"*Nee pozvoliayoot koorect* (They don't allow smoking)," said the first, a little more gently.

"Coorious?" exclaimed Joey: "I were a-thinkin' sum'at o' the same thing. Wery coorious! The strangest lingo I hiver heerd!"

And he coolly put the cigar between his teeth again, and puffed away.

"*Nee kooreete!*" (Don't smoke!) cried the policeman angrily.

"That 'ere must mean coorios'ty," said Joey: "they thinks I be coorious, and doesn't like it. No, gintlemen, I've no coorios'ty whatsomiver: I were a-goin' to Mr. Cameron's house, which it ort to be somewheeres here-aways, to see my darter. Can ye tell wheere it be?"

"You mustn't smoke, I tell you!" repeated the policeman in Russ.

Joey puffed away. But the patience of the policeman was exhausted; and, without further ado, he knocked the cigar out of the captain's mouth.

"That 'ere were more nor I barg'ned for,"

said Joey; and he doubled up his fists, and pitched into the man, knocking him down at one blow. But he suddenly remembered that smoking in the street was strictly forbidden, and understood that the policeman had only done his duty. So he stooped over his fallen foe, and added: "I begs yer pardon."

But it was too late: the other policeman struck Joe down with his halberd. That was how elephantine figure came to grief. The policeman was about to repeat the stroke, when Sal sprang forward in time to catch the halberd with one hand, while with the other she dealt a blow which sent the highly-inconvenient halberdier reeling after his fallen brother. Then she fell on her knees by her father's side, and kissed his purple face.

"Oh, fayther, fayther!" she cried: "what's the matter? I b'lieved at first as ye was screwed agin!" Receiving no answer, she continued: "Bless'd if they hasn't done for fun! The beasties! The Highlanders! The cannon-balls! Why don't ye answer, fayther?"

"I were stunned like. Be that you, Sal?"

"Ay, father, it's Sal Willin', and no mistake. Whereabouts be ye hurt, fayther?"

“How coom ye to be yere, Sal?”

“I were a-ridin’ in the carridge wi’ Miss Helen, when I seed ye a-sailin’ up the street——”

Poor Sal’s speech was rudely interrupted. The policemen had risen by this time; and one of them suddenly clapped a handcuff on her left wrist. She struggled with the man: but his comrade came to his help; and between them they tried to overpower the girl. Joey had risen, and was looking on in bewilderment.

“Be ye men?” he cried: “if ye’ve hany ’spect for a fayther’s feelin’s, let the lass be, and clap the darbies on me. I be a man.”

And he held out his huge hands.

“Oh, fayther, run away!” cried Sal: “they’ll hev’ enough to do to look harter me; and I doant mind it a bit—indeed, I doant. If only Miss Helen was told on’t!”

“No, Sal,” answered Joey solemnly; “I were in the wrong. If it warn’t for that ’ere, d’ye think I’d let ’em clap the darbies on ye afore my werry heyes? But I were in the wrong; and, ye sees, I can’t hact.”

“Niver mind me, fayther.”

“But what ha’ ye done, lass, that they

should grab ye, like that ere? My poor Sal!"

"I seed that feller a-fellin' on ye," answered Sal simply; "and in coorse I knocked 'un down."

"But ye'd no bizness to do that 'ere, Sal. Lawr be lawr; and p'leece be p'leece, all the world over. If it warn't for that 'ere, how could I manidge my crew?"

"I'll be all right, fayther."

The policemen had put the handcuff on her wrists.

"Eh, lass, but this be a wery sorry sight!" cried Joey, looking pitifully at her: "who 'ould ha' thought as I should ha' lived to see my Sal in darbies?"

"I'll git used to 'em in time, fayther," said Sal cheerfully. "If only Miss Helen was told on't! I've a great mind to holler. P'raps some 'un may hear."

All this time, Captain Willing had been meekly holding out his pugilistic hands for the handcuff. When the policemen tried to put it on, he said:

"I begs your pardon, gintlemen. I were in the wrong: I'd no bizzness to smoke."

But Joey's wrists were so big, that the

handcuff would not close over them. Both the men tried their utmost strength, giving the captain excruciating agonies. Poor Sal was boiling over with indignation, and cried :

“Be ye men ; or be ye beasties ? Doan’t ye see how ye’re a-hurtin’ on ’un ?”

But Joey only said :

“A tight fit, gintlemen ; a wery tight fit ! I s’pose ye doan’t hoften ha’ to do wi’ fists as ha’ felled a champin’, and doan’t go purwided with harticles accordin’.”

A common cart and pair was passing by at the moment ; and the policemen, without saying so much as “by your leave,” cut off one of the traces with their halberds, and tied Joey’s hands behind his back.

“Now march !”

And the men pointed down Pea Street : away from Mr. Cameron’s house.

“Take keer o’ my pa’cel, gintlemen,” said Joey, pointing to it as it lay on the ground : “I shouldn’t trouble ye ; but, ye sees, ye’ve left me ne’er a hand to grab it wi’. A wery ’portant pa’cel it be ; and, if as how it coom to grief, I’ll hold ye ’sponsible for it, gintlemen.”

One of the men picked up the parcel.

“What’s in the pa’cel, fayther?” asked Sal. Joey winked and chuckled as he answered:

“Niver ye mind, lass. Mind yer hown business; and ye’ll niver come to grief. If ye’d ha’ done that ’ere this mornin’—— But I’m not a-goin’ to jaw ye for standin’ up for yer ould fayther. Now, Sal, be ye ready?”

Sal, seeing that they were going away from Mr. Cameron’s house, was inclined to be “obstropolous:” but a sharp argument *a posteriori* from one of the piked halberds proved irresistible; and father and daughter marched on, guarded by a policeman on each side. A most ridiculous pair!

“How d’ye like yer sitivation, lass?” asked Joey.

“Charmin’!” answered Sal: “quite a paradige! And the darbies doesn’t sinnify much.”

“What be the lass a-thinkin’ on?”

“Why, the sitivation we be hin at this yere momink, to be sure, fayther.”

Joey burst out laughing.

“Oh, ay: well, lass, I’ve been more comfortable like in my time; and the darbies isn’t much of a hornament. Ye looks purtier without ’em, lass.”

“I be wery comfortable, fayther; and I’m

a-thinkin' as it's one's hown in'ards as makes the darbies look so frightful like. They be nothink when ye cooms a-near 'em."

"P'raps: I be glad, at any rate, as ye thinks so in this yere hawkward fix. But, Sal, I were a-thinkin' of yer sitivation in Mr. Cameron's family."

"Oh, that! Well, fayther, that be a paradiage too: plenty to heat, and nothink to do. And Miss Helen, she be a hangel, if hiver there was one."

"And how be she, lass?"

"Oncommon well, fayther: niver seed her look so well afore."

"I be main glad."

"D'ye mind the for'n capt'n as coomed hover wi' her on board the *Boreas*, that 'ere time as ye was all soused in the mighty hoshum?" asked Sal.

"Ay, ay, lass."

"He be Miss Helen's sweetheart now."

"Why, lass, he were dead!"

"Ay, fayther, but he hev' coom to life agin."

I can scarcely convey to you any idea of the eagerness and energy with which Joey exclaimed:

"For'n capt'n Miss Helen's sweetheart?"

“Sartinly.”

“Avast !”

You should have heard Joey’s roar. He stood still for a moment, shaking with laughter, and, with his hands tied behind, looked a ridiculous figure. Impatient police forced to apply another *a posteriori* argument before he would “move on.”

“Well, fayther, is there anythink to wonder at in that ’ere ?” asked Sal in astonishment.

“Nothink,” answered Joey, still laughing. “Al’ays thought as there were sum’at atween ’em ; but she ’ouldn’t hear on’t. Thought her oncommon sweet on ’un.”

“But he be in quod now.”

“For’n capt’n in quod ?”

“Ees, fayther.”

Joey walked in silence for a while, pondering the awful problem : for’n capt’n in quod ! At length, having seemingly mastered it, he asked anxiously :

“What for ?”

Could for’n capt’n be a scoundrel ?

“For ’spirin’ agin’ the Rooshan guv’ment.”

“Were he mixed up wi’ that ere *Union* as one heerd so much on last winter, lass ?”

“He were, fayther.”

“They was good ’uns—*they* was!”

“Stunnin’!”

Captain Willing walked on in silence for a still longer time, pondering the news. The result of his meditations was embodied in the following profound remark:

“Eh, lass, God A’mighty do hev’ an on-common queer way o’ managin’ *his* crew.”

“And, d’ye know, fayther,” said Sal, “she be a-goin’ to foller ’un to Siberiar.”

“Avast!”

A compound “Avast” this time: made up of wonder, admiration, and grief, in nearly equal parts.

“I went wi’ she this mornin’, to see ’un in quod,” continued Sal: “I hoften goes wi’ she; and I were returnin’ when I seed ye a-trudgin’ up the street.”

“And how be for’n capt’n?”

“Oncommon brave: he bear up wonderful; and so do she, for the matter o’ that, fayther.”

“Ay, he were a good ’un, lass—for a for’ner.”

Sal was trying all this time to tell her father that she had promised to accompany Helen to Siberia. But she did not know how to bring it out. Confidently as she had spoken about

it that morning, she was sure that her father would take it deeply to heart. So she kept beating about the bush.

“D’ye know, fayther,” she said, “when I seed ye tumble down jist now, I thought ye was tight agin.”

Did she wish to remind him of the debt he owed Helen? As if he could ever forget it!

“Eh, lass,” answered Joey, “not a drop hev passed atween these yere lips sin’ ye tempted me that ere mornin’; and I’d pray God A’mighty to sew ’em up sooner nor a drop should pass atween ’em agin—I ’ould indeed! Ye doan’t b’lieve me, lass.”

“I b’lieves ye.”

So unlike her daily “I b’lieves ye!”

Still Sal could not summon up courage to broach the subject of Siberia. And soon the opportunity slipped away.

“Hey, policemen, stop!” cried a voice behind.

Sal did not understand the words; but she knew the voice. The policemen did not know the voice; but they understood the words and the tone of authority. By a common impulse, they stopped, and turned.

There was Captain Alexeyev coming toward

them at the top of his speed. He had gone to Mr. Cameron's house again that day to congratulate Helen on the morning's good news; and Helen, feeling anxious about Sal, had begged him to go and look after the girl. Hence his appearance on the scene.

"Thank goodness, here coom a friend of Miss Helen's," said Sal cheerily: "a great friend o' for'n capt'n's, fayther; a for'n capt'n hissen for the matter o' that."

Captain Alexeyev had come up, and was now speaking to the guardians of order in a tone of anger.

"Lay hands on an English barishnia!" he said: "how dared you, rascals? Lost your senses?"

"Barishnia!" exclaimed one of the men.

"What will Majesty say when he hears of it?" continued Alexeyev.

"The man was smoking——"

"The man may go to the——, for aught I care!" interrupted Alexeyev. "I spoke of barishnia."

"The *barishnia* knocked me down with her fist!" said man, smiling.

"Wheugh!—Why did she do that?"

"Because the man had knocked my com-

rade down ; and I gave him a touch of my halberd."

Alexeyev turned to Sal, and asked in English :

" You champion for all the world ? "

" I wish to goodness I was a champing ! "

" What business to put on that man's quarrel ? "

" Why, this be my fayther. "

" Wheugh ! "

" I were in the wrong, Capt'n, " said Joey :
 " I were a fool to smoke in the street—that I were. "

" But why not give up when policeman tell you ? "

" I niver heerd 'un tell me, capt'n. "

Alexeyev turned again to the policeman, and said :

" Put your foot into it this time, and no mistake, my men ! Gentleman barishnia's father : and barishnia friend of richest English merchant in Petersburg ; rich enough to buy all the police in Russia ! Put your foot into it with a vengeance ! Backs will have to be pickled before the day is over. "

The men began to feel uneasy : almost as if the pickling process had already begun !

“What are we to do, your honour?”

“Advise you to let them go.”

“How can we?” said one policeman.

“Know me?”

“No, your honour.”

“Captain Alexeyev, aide-de-camp to Majesty, the Emperor, and all that sort of thing.”

Both the men touched their hats, trembling in their shoes the while. “What will Majesty say when he hears of it?” And here was Majesty’s own aide-de-camp!

Joey saw them tremble: and his generous heart was touched.

“Doan’t ye go and be hard on the p’leece-men, capt’n; ’cause, ye sees, I were in the wrong on it. Besides, capt’n, they’ve hed their punishment. Sal and me, atween us, ha’ given ’em a wollopin.’ And that be no joke, I can tell ye: them two” (trying to hold up his fists, and suddenly reminded by the pain that he could not), “as ye may see ahind my back, ha’ felled a champing in their time; and Sal, she hev a gift in that ’ere line too.”

“I take on myself the responsibility,” added Alexeyev to the policemen: “off with the fetters; and thank your stars that I am good-

natured. Next time you make such a stupid blunder, have the pickle ready beforehand."

Joey and Sal were speedily released; and Captain Alexeyev walked off with them in triumph.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ALABASTER BOX.

“Man is weak, God is dread :
Yet the weakest man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured an oil of love but once on the Saviour's feet
As I lavished on these.”

MRS. BROWNING : *Confessions*.

BEFORE he left the policeman, Captain Willing had taken good care to secure his parcel ; and, as he walked along with Captain Alexeyev, he every now and then hugged it almost affectionately. More than once, too, he winked at Sal, as much as to say : “Ye'll see—what ye'll see. This be a 'portant pa'cel !”

Captain Alexeyev left him at Mr. Cameron's gate ; and Sal straightway conducted him to the breakfast-room. Helen was not there : Natalia said she was walking in the garden. Sal left her father alone, and went out in search of Miss Helen : she knew how glad Helen would be to see her father again.

As soon as he was left alone, Captain Willing brought out a huge red cotton pocket-handkerchief, and wiped his forehead and his face. Having performed this most needful

“operation,” he began to examine the room, staring at all the furniture, especially at the paintings on the walls, and taking stock of the whole, as if he were an appraiser or an auctioneer.

He was still busy with his survey, when the object of his worship entered the room. Helen smiled and held out her hand, which he gallantly kissed: as she had once given him leave, might he not avail himself of the privilege as long as he lived?

“I am very glad to see you again, Captain Willing,” said Helen heartily.

“And so be I to see you, miss; and lookin’ so bonny too! Bless my heart alive, but ye looks oncommon purty and well. I niver seed ye look better, miss.”

“You haven’t seen me often,” answered Helen archly; “so you can’t well judge, you know.”

“Bless ye, miss, no’ more I hev’: seem as I’d knowed ye all my life, like.”

“You are looking well too, Captain Willing—though not pretty,” Helen added to herself.

“It be the hegg, miss. An oncommon stroke of work ye did that day, to be sure! But I’m a-goin’ down the wale for all

that; into the wery in'ards, as one might say."

"You can enter into Jonah's experience, then, Captain Willing," said Helen, smiling archly.

She was in the very highest spirits; brimful of sprightliness and fun: did ever any one rejoice so much at the thought of going to Siberia? There was *her* "paradige!" Captain Willing did not see the joke, and looked very grave. A Scripture character, you know!

"I doesn't take ye in, miss," he said.

"You could if you liked," answered Helen, glancing at Joey's capacious person: "room enough there, I'm sure."

Captain Willing burst out laughing; a regular guffaw. He could "take in" that joke.

"Ay, ay, miss; though ye ain't a little 'un, mind ye. But about that 'ere Jonar, miss?"

"Didn't Jonah 'go down the whale?'—'into the very in'ards,' as you say?" asked Helen.

How Joey roared! He said:

"That 'ere beat me—that 'ere do!"

"What? the whale?"

This was enough to set Joey off again: "it were as good's a play." But he could not help

wondering at the same time. "For'n capt'n in quod ; for'n capt'n a-goin' to Siberiar : and Miss Helen so full of fun !" After a while, he said :

"That 'ere were not what I meant, miss ; not exackly. But it be a true saying for all that. 'Cause why ? Ye sees, miss, a whale did beat me oncet."

"How was that ?"

"Ye sees, miss, I were in the whale line of bizzness when I were young. Well, miss, oncet, while I were out in a boat, along wi' others, after one o' them monsters o' the deep, what do the spiteful feller do, but takes it into his noddle to give us a kick wi' that 'ere tail o' his'n. Next momink, we was all on us afloat on the mighty hoshun."

"Were you not afraid that the whale would swallow you up, as he did Jonah ?"

"No, no, miss, I know'd better nor that," answered Joey, winking and chuckling inwardly. "But I'll tell ye what I *were* afearred on : that I were a-goin' to be drowned in the mighty hoshun ; boat bein' kicked to shivers by that 'ere tail."

"What did you do ?"

Captain Willing's tone changed at once.

"I prayed to God A'mighty," he said :
"that were what I done, miss."

Helen felt solemnised too. She remembered having been deeply interested in another specimen of Joey's "gift in that line." So she asked :

"What did you say?"

"The wery words, d'ye mean?"

"Yes, if you don't mind my hearing them."

"I'd as lieve ye heerd 'ein as hany one else. Well, miss, as nigh as I can mind, I b'lieves I said : ' Lord High Hadmiral aloft ! I've niver bother'd ye afore, as far as I knows on ; and, if ye'll git me out o' this yere 'tarnal fix, I'll take my hoath on't as I'll niver bother yer Lordship again. Now do git me out o' this yere ! "

All Helen's solemnity was gone : she was well-nigh splitting with laughter ; but Joey looked so grave, and spoke so solemnly, that, for his sake, she tried to check herself. As soon as she could speak, she said :

"What a strange argument ! You don't believe, Captain Willing, that God is annoyed by our prayers ?"

Joey pondered the problem for a long time, rubbing his chin in lieu of his usual peri-

patetic "aid to reflection." At length he answered:

"Well, ye sees, miss, I didn't keep the hoath mysen' harter all: I've bother'd 'un agin and agin at a pinch; and I've niver found 'un hangry wi' me for a-doin' on't. And so I've coom to think as the more ye bothers 'un the better he like it; and I do b'lieve as God A'mighty hev bother'd me more than oncet o' purpose to make me bother 'un. But, ye sees, miss, I were a hignorant fellow then: I thought as God A'mighty were sum'at like Lord Nelson—honly sum'at bigger like, 'cause, ye sees, he were a little 'un."

Helen had never known Joey to be talkative before: had the joy of seeing her and Sal unloosed his tongue?

"Well, Captain Willing, I am glad the whale did not swallow you up," she said.

"It couldn't, miss, big as it were," replied Joey: "just as I, big as I be, can't quite take in that 'ere story of Jonar. And I ort to know sum'at about 'un; cause I were in the whale line mysen', as I were a-tellin' of ye."

"But Jonah was not living when you were in the whale line," said Helen.

"Ye be as full of fun as Sal hersen'," an-

swered Joey. "I s'pose ye thought I were a-goin' to say as I'd a-met that 'ere Jonar in the whale trade. No, no, miss: I baint quite so hignorant as that 'ere coom to. Still, miss, I ort to know sum'at about 'un: 'cause, ye sees, many and many's the whale as I've cut up with these yere hands; and I knows as the guzzle of 'un be too narrer to swaller up a man alive, heven if ye crammed 'un down his throat. That 'ere Jonar must ha' been mashed to a jelly afore he could git into his in'ards; and it stand to raison as he couldn't be alive and kickin' harter that 'ere."

"Perhaps it was some other fish."

"That 'ere book do say it were a whale," persisted Captain Willing: "I seen it mysen'."

"I have heard it said that that is a mistake in the translation."

Joey thought for a while, and then answered:

"I knows nowt of your translashuns: I seen it in the book mysen'. Why, miss, ye yersen' said jist now as Jonar gone down the whale into the wery in'ards—ye did indeed!"

Caught in this trap, Helen acknowledged:

"I ought not to have said it."

Captain Willing was silent longer than usual this morning, trying to think how he could

congratulate Helen on her engagement to Captain Maleenovsky. Would it not seem like reproaching her for deceiving him before? Diligently stroking his chin to stir up his brains, he approached the theme in a round-about way.

“I were main sorry, miss, when I heerd Sal say as for’n capt’n were in quod.”

It was Helen’s turn not to understand. Of course, “for’n capt’n” was Maleenovsky. But “in quod?” A euphuism for “criminal?”

She suddenly turned red, and, looking Captain Willing full in the face, said quite sharply :

“He has done nothing to be ashamed of.”

“In coorse, miss ! I al’ays thought as he were a fine feller—for a for’ner ; and I wish ye all joy. But, ye sees, miss, there’s many ways of gittin’ in quod. Why, miss, I were wery near gittin’ in quod mysen’ this mornin’ ; and all for smokin’ in that ’ere street, and a-pitchin’ into a feller as knocked down—my cigar ! And I reads in that ’ere book as them ’postles—Peter and the lave on ’em—was a’most as hoften in quod as out on’t. So, ye sees, miss, one may git in quod without doin’ nowt to be ashamed on. Wery easy done !”

So in quod meant in prison.

"It *is* a comfort to think of that," said Helen; "I will tell him what you have said."

Captain Willing stroked his chin harder than ever.

"D'ye think, miss, he'd like to see me? Happen I may cheer 'un up a bit."

"I am sure he would: he has often talked about you, and calls you my generous champion."

Joey's face brightened up, but soon was overcast again.

"Ah, miss, he were the rayal champing," he said; "and I were nowt but a drunken fool.—And so, miss, ye're a-goin' to foller 'un to Siberiar?"

"Yes, Captain Willing."

"God A'mighty bless yer noble heart! Happen ye'll meet 'un in Siberiar as well as elsewheeres."

"Oh, yes, it is a comfort to think that God is everywhere."

Captain Willing looked thoughtful for a moment, and then asked:

"D'ye think, miss, He be in *hell*?"

Helen was startled: that profound theological problem had never presented itself to her.

"I've never thought of it before," she said.

"I think He be: if He's hiverywheeres, He must be theere too. I was a-readin' in that 'ere book t'other day, as how, if one made one's bed theere (wery warm and comf'table it must be in winter), one'd find 'un theere. Coorious too it were; 'cause that wery night there were sum'at like a mutiny—not exackly a mutiny, but a grumble like—among my crew along of hevin' a short allowance o' grog. And, as I gone down to the hold to jaw my men, thinks I: 'Happen God A'mighty, He go down to t'other place to bring his mutinous crew to their senses.'"

"You seem to have read the Bible a good deal of late," said Helen.

"Why, yes, miss, I've took to readin' 'un o' late. I niver were the man to back out of a barg'n. Besides, I like 'un. 'Cause why? Ye sees, it seems like to say: 'And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin'? And why not for Sal's sakes, Mr. Willin'?'"

Helen Cameron the original "Revelation" to Joey, and the Bible the "Evidences!" Process reversed!

"I am very, very glad."

“Talkin’ o’ Sal,” continued Captain Willing, “how do she behave hersen’, miss?”

“Oh, Captain Willing, I can’t tell you what a comfort she has been to me,” answered Helen warmly.

A broad grin passed across Jocy’s face.

“I be main glad, miss. And how be ye a-gettin’ on, miss, in makin’ a leddy on her accordin’ to barg’n?”

“I am sorry to say I can see no progress.”

“Ah, miss, that be a pity. ’Cause why? Ye sees the fortin be sartin sure to coom; as sure’s my name’s Joe Willin’. I sees my way clear to that ’ere! Well, niver ye mind, miss: happen God A’mighty’ll take her in hand hissen’. Think He will, miss?”

Poor Helen could scarcely speak for laughing, and, to turn the subject, said:

“By-the-way, where can Sal be? I thought she’d come as soon as she took off her bonnet.”

Captain Willing chuckled; and another broad grin came over his unbeautiful face.

“No, no,” he said: “she know her place better nor that ’ere. Happen she guess as I wants to speak to ye by yersen’. But now I’d like her to come in, by yer lave, miss.”

Helen rang the bell, and sent Natalia after Sal. Joey produced the parcel, and began to open it slowly. The process was not over before Sal came in; and the girl stood watching her father. A present for her? Was she not to see—what she would see? The “’portant pa’cel!”

When the last wrappage was unrolled, two Paisley shawls came into view. Both of the finest materials, and both evidently costly: but otherwise as unlike each other as they could well be; the one being remarkably neat and quiet, and the other in the gaudiest style, with a large conspicuous pattern, and strong staring colours, in which every hue in the rainbow seemed to have a place, red and yellow predominating.

Helen judged that Captain Willing had brought them as presents for Sal and herself; and she could not help admiring the taste he had shown in choosing such a quiet pattern for her, while indulging Sal’s love of show. As to Sal, she was in ecstasies. She swiftly pounced upon the gaudy article, and cried enthusiastically:

“How be-yoot’ful!”

“Wait till yer ’pinion be asked, Sal,” said

Joey severely. "That ere be for yer betters, lass! It 'ouldn't be right for ye to *look* like a grand leddy till ye *be* one."

Helen's report of Sal rankling in his breast!

"Ye're right there, fayther," said Sal meekly, holding down her head.

But she was sorely disappointed nevertheless. As to Helen, she was tickled by Joey's ideas of grand-ladyhood. Captain Willing brought the gaudy shawl to Helen, and said eagerly:

"If ye'll accept this yere harticle, miss, as a small token of geratitude from one as ye oncet——"

"No, thank you, Captain Willing," interrupted Helen, speaking in a decided manner: "I am very much obliged to you; but I must not think of accepting it."

Poor Joey looked dreadfully disappointed: he hung down his head, and was long silent.

"I sees how it be," he said at length: "ye won't accept nothink from a drunken ould fool like mysen'."

"Indeed it isn't that."

"What be it then, miss?" asked Joey: "if I may be so bold as to ask," he added.

"This must have cost you a great deal."

Joey winked significantly.

“Niver ye mind what it costed, miss: I knows what’s what: and I sees my way clear to the fortin.”

“But, Captain Willing——”

What had come over Joey? He was quite fluent, and had no need of his wonted stimulus to rouse up his torpid faculties. Was it merely the joy of seeing Helen and Sal? Or had the temperance egg really quickened his brain?

“Ah, miss,” he said, cutting Helen’s speech short, “I reads in that ere book as how, when a poor ’oman, as were, like mysen’, no better nor she ort to ha’ been, brought a halibaster box o’ precious hointment, *very costly*, sich as she could ill afford, poor wretch, and poured ’un on the feet of One as I knows ye loves, miss, she warn’t kicked away for her pains by them ’ere blessed feet. D’ye mind a-readin’ of it to me out o’ that ’ere book?”

Helen was overcome at last: her eyes filled with tears; and her voice quivered as she spoke.

“Oh, Captain Willing, you humble me!”

“Ye jist go and do like Him ye loves to think on, miss,” said Captain Willing.

“I will think about it.—Has Sal told you

that she has offered to go with me to Siberia?"

"Avast!"

No need of a context this time: the genuine "Avast" of unmingled pain! Joey started as if he had been shot: he trembled so much that he could scarcely stand, and soon sank into the nearest chair. The workings of his huge face were frightful to see. Sal went up to him, placed her arm on his shoulder, and kissed his forehead.

"Oh, fayther, fayther," she said: "I had no hidear as ye'd took on so—I hadn't indeed!"

Joey threw his arms round her neck, as if thus he could keep her by his side, and cried:

"What could I do without ye, Sal?"

"Think no more about it, Captain Willing," said Helen earnestly.

"Ah, miss, I be more selfish nor I thought I were. If ye'd ha' hasked me this morning, I 'ould ha' said as there were nothink I 'ouldn't do for ye: no, nothink! I know'd as I'd die for ye. But I niver thought o' this yere: God A'mighty, He know as I niver thought o' this yere! Oh, miss, don't ye think hard o' me!"

“Believe me, Captain Willing, I honour you all the more for your love to Sal.”

“Ye honours me?” exclaimed Joey. “Oh, God A’mighty help me!”

Suddenly he started from his seat, and was off like a shot. Helen thought it was to indulge in his old habit. But he stopped at the windows, keeping his back turned to the ladies.

“Go to your father, Sal,” said Helen.

“Doan’t ye follow me!” cried Joey: “I be dangerous at this yere momink.”

“He’s better by hissen’, miss,” said Sal.

Joey remained with his back to the ladies a long time. The only sound they could hear was that sent forth by the blowing of his gigantic nose, which every now and then sounded like a trumpet. When he turned round at last, the signs of struggle were clearly visible on his face. In a voice touching from its tenderness, he said:

“I were a-readin’ in that ’ere book t’other day as how Abraham guv’ up his son, his honly son; and God A’mighty hissen’——”

But here poor Joey broke down.

“Think no more about it, Captain Willing.”

“Miss, I were a selfish ongrateful wretch,” said Joey. “If it hadn’t ha’ been for you, miss, wherever should I ha’ been, miss? ‘And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin’? And why not for Sal’s——’”

Another break down.

“Oh, Captain Willing——”

“Take her, miss : take her ! It’s all I hev’ to give !”

And Captain Willing rushed out of the room. The alabaster box had “come” at last.

CHAPTER XIX.

SAL'S TREAT.

"*Pistol.* The king's a bawcock and a heart of gold,
 A lad of life, an imp of fame,
 Of parents good, of fist most valiant :
 I kiss his dirty shoe, and from my heart-strings
 I love the lovely bully. What's thy name ?

King Henry. Harry *le Roy*.

Pist. *Le Roy* ! a Cornish name : art thou of Cornish crew ?

K. Hen. No, I am a Welshman."

SHAKSPERE : *King Henry V.*

IN the afternoon of that day Captain Maleenovsky set off on his journey to Siberia.

The following morning Helen was at breakfast with her father when Natalia announced Captain Willing.

Mr. Cameron eagerly held out his hand. Joey looked down on the little man with a bewildered stare. Who were that 'ere ? When Helen hastened to introduce him as her father, Joey stared still harder. That plain-looking little man the father of that "big and purty young leddy !" God A'mighty had an uncommon queer way o' pairin' folks ! There was something like a smile of contempt on his broad face : I rather think Joey (figuratively

as well as literally) looked down on small people. Well, certainly, nearly two Mr. Camerons, unquestionably more than a Mr. Cameron and a-half, might have been carved out of his own huge bulk.

One could see that Joey was doing his best to look cheerful and unconcerned; but Mr. Cameron's presence somehow jarred on his feelings, and well-nigh made his brave effort a failure. Was he jealous of Mr. Cameron? After the greetings were over, Mr. Cameron said, in the kindest tone and manner:

"Sit down and have pot-luck with us, Captain."

"I've had my grub," answered Joey stiffly: "I be a hearly bird—I be. Thankin' ye all the same, sir," he added somewhat more graciously.

"Surely you can 'take in' some more, Captain Willing," remarked Helen archly: "you have plenty of room, you know; and *he* has seen you stow away three or four bottles somewhere about your person."

Joey roared, and seemed to relax a little.

"Ay, miss, that 'cre were a sell, and no mistake. Oncommon dished for'n prince looked, to be sure!"

“Do let me send you a cup of tea or coffee, Captain Willing,” said Helen in a wheedling tone.

“Well, I doan’t mind if I hev’ one, miss, ye asks so purty like. Tay’s my drink hiver sin’ I giv’ up——”

But here he stopped. He had learnt self-respect within the last few months, and could no longer look complacently on the drunken old sailor as a historical personage. To Helen he could still speak freely of his past sins: was not Miss Helen his oracle? But to a little stranger like Mr. Cameron? His growing self-respect shut his mouth.

As soon as Joey sat down, Mr. Cameron said:

“I can’t tell you how deeply I feel indebted to you, Captain, for all you have done for Miss Cameron. I thank you with all my heart.”

Joey stiffened at once. An impertinence for any one to thank him for what he had done for Miss Helen! What had Mr. Cameron to do with the matter? You see that he could not yet realise that Mr. Cameron was Helen’s father. He had almost come to look on Miss Helen as his own; in the sense, not of a child

exactly, but of an angel or a patron saint. Had not God A'mighty sent Helen Cameron into the world to reclaim Joey Willing?

"No need for that 'ere," he answered coldly, almost haughtily: "I done nothink more nor my juty."

I think Helen roughly guessed what was passing in his mind. She said sweetly:

"Just think, Captain Willing. Suppose any one had succoured Sal in danger, would you not feel thankful to him?"

"Ay, miss, I'd wery nigh fall down at his feet."

"I am papa's Sal, you know."

"Wery true, miss."

And Joey's heart softened a little toward Mr. Cameron: the thought of Sal, suggested by "the pictur" of Sal, had done its work.

"Talkin' o' Sal," said Joey, "I've coom, miss, to beg ye for a loan of her."

"A loan of Sal!" exclaimed Helen, almost shocked: "Oh, Captain Willing!"

Joey misunderstood her: unwilling to part with Sal even by way of loan? Rather hard on him!

"If it ain't haskin' too much," he continued

quite meekly : " it ain't for long, miss ; honly for this yere day."

" Oh, Captain Willing, what do you mean ? Sal is your own."

" No, no," answered Joey shaking his head : " I've guv' her up to ye ; and I bain't the man to back out on a barg'n. And, ye sees, miss, I wants to giv' her a treat like, jist for oncet, afore she start for——'scuse me !"

And Joey himself started from his seat and bolted. Not far, however : he stopped at one of the windows. Mr. Cameron was looking on with amazement. What call had the old sailor to look out into the courtyard ? A sudden attack of colic ? But Helen's eyes were moist.

" He is upset by the thought of parting from Sal," she whispered.

There was a long pause : Joey still engaged with the courtyard. But, after a while, he turned round again : evidently trying to look as cheerful as he could ; but not succeeding so far as to hide the signs of deep feeling on his face. He went on to say, as if nothing had happened :

" And so, miss, if ye'll give Sal leave to go wi' her ould fayther this yere day——"

Not another break-down, but an interruption

from Helen this time. To the tips of her fingers she felt thrilled by the thought of his self-sacrifice, written as it was at this moment on his face. The tears were streaming down her own. To Mr. Cameron's amazement she walked up to the coarse old sailor, and kissed his purple cheek.

"Oh, Captain Willing!" she exclaimed: "you are one of the noblest men I ever saw. I reverence you!"

Poor Joey was overwhelmed: this additional drop in his cup made it run over. Self-control gone: he sobbed aloud, and no longer even tried to hide his feelings.

"Eh, miss," he cried, "that 'ere beat me—that 'ere do! God A'mighty bless ye, miss, for that 'ere! I were a poor drunken ould fool when ye took pity on me; and, if there's hany think in this rotten ould carcage as ain't to be ashamed on, I howes it all to you—I does! Little did I think when I sheered off from ye ashamed like, that 'ere day as ye was a-jawin' on me for bein' screwed, as the day 'ould coom when ye 'ould be a-kissin' on me! Eh, miss, God A'mighty do hev' a way o' bringin' things about wonderful!"

"But, Captain Willing, I see that the

thought of parting with Sal cuts you to the heart. Think no more about it."

"Not harter that 'ere, miss: not harter that 'ere!"

"Look on what I said yesterday as unsaid."

Joey answered slowly and emphatically:

"I sees how it be, miss: ye thinks me a weak ould fool for not a-hidin' on my feelin's——"

"No, I never thought that," said Helen.

"Eh, miss, the day may coom as ye'll know what it be to part from a lass as ye've——"

"Think over it before you decide, Captain Willing."

"Ye sees, miss, I hev thought on it; thought on nothink else the wole of this yere night as is gone: and seem to me as how God A'mighty coom to me, as he done to Abraham that 'ere night, and tell me to give up my Sal. No, no, miss, heven in my wust days I niver were the man to back out o' my word; and I'm not a-goin' to begin now as I'm a-goin' down the wale, and a-gittin' a bit whitewashed like. No, miss, that 'ere blessed kiss were the seal to the barg'n atween us. Ye jist go and do yer best to make a ledly on her: happen God

A'mighty'll take a hand in that 'ere, and help ye to do the job accordin' to barg'n."

"Where were you thinking of going with Sal to-day?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"I hadn't exackly fixed: anywheeres'll do."

"Why not go to Peterhoff?"

"What's to be seen there?"

"It is the Emperor's summer residence: shouldn't wonder if he himself is there now."

"That'll do: I'd like to see this yere new himp'rer o' yourn."

"My carriage will take you; and Meeshka, my coachman, will show you all that is to be seen."

"We ain't carriage folk," said Joey.

"Besides," put in Helen, "if you and Sal knock down any more policemen, you know, Captain, it will be highly desirable to have some one on the spot that knows you to bring you safe home. Otherwise you may find yourself 'in quod:' not a nice thing I can tell you—spite of Apostolic example. And how could Sal go with me to Siberia if she were 'in quod?'"

Joey roared.

"Eh, miss, you'll be a bust of sunshine to some 'un some day. I'd niver mind bein' in

quod mysen', if so be as yer bonny face was to be al'ays a-beamin' on me theere. D'ye know, miss, I a'most henvies for'n capt'n, though be a-goin' to Siberiar."

"He is gone."

Captain Willing suddenly became grave.

"Eh, miss, happen God A'mighty gone with 'un."

"I am sure of it."

Joey was silent for a while, and then said :

"I takes it, miss, as there ain't much to to skeer 'un where he be. I s'pose Siberiar be wild'ness ; but happen God A'mighty'll make 'un blossom like that 'ere rose, according to barg'n."

"Really, Captain Willing, you are a rare comforter !" exclaimed Helen. "I had no idea of it before."

Captain Willing's huge face broadened into a grin ; and an unwonted light kindled his once watery eyes.

"Be I, miss ?" he cried.

"Yes, you have quite cheered me."

"There were no need for that 'ere as I knows on. Well, miss, if so be ye find as God A'mighty stick to the barg'n, ye jist mind Sal to send me one of them roses."

"If I find a rose in Siberia, I will send you one myself," answered Helen, laughing.

"Ye'll take one theere, anyhow : and happen the folks theereabouts 'll see a rose for first time."

"Certainly : I am going to take Sal, you know."

And Helen laughed again. Captain Willing winked, and shook his head, and said :

"There's no coomin' over ye, miss."

Mr. Cameron sent Meeshka word to have the carriage ready at once. Sal was sent for, and went up-stairs to dress ; and her father finished his second edition of a breakfast in peace.

When Sal returned, she wore the gaudy shawl which Joey had given Helen the day before. Her father stared at her for a while ; and gradually his face settled into a frown. Sternly he asked :

"What be the meanin' o' that 'ere ?"

"Sal has taken a fancy to this shawl," said Helen.

"Sich a be-yooty it be !" cried Sal.

"Sal ort to know better nor that," said Joey severely, still frowning on Sal.

"And do you know, Captain Willing, I

have taken as great a fancy to the other," continued Helen.

Joey looked up in bewilderment: prefer the plain harticle to the grand?

"Well, there's no 'countin' for tastes," he cried.

"Besides, don't you think it will be best for me in my position not to be too gaily dressed?"

Captain Willing stroked his chin, and pondered the hard problem. His answer was:

"Well, miss, there's sum'at in that 'ere. It 'ould look as how ye said: 'I means to be a grand leddy spite o' yer gov'ment, and spite o' for'n capt'n bein' hactilly a hexile in Siberia."

All further discussion was put an end to by Natalia's announcing:

"The carriage is ready."

Another surprise awaited Joey in the courtyard. Mr. Cameron's carriage was very different from that "ram-shackle affair" of a sledge. In truth, it was one of the finest specimens of the coach-builder's art; and matched well with the pair of magnificent English greys which drew it. Joey looked at it with admiration, and exclaimed:

“Why, the Himp’rer hissen’ couldn’t hev’ a grander turn-out.”

And they drove off. There was a certain want of keeping between the carriage and its occupants. The passers-by in the streets evidently thought so too, and laughed. I believe a good many thought that the burly old giant in the sailor’s dress was going to marry the gawky young giantess in the gorgeous shawl. Meeshka looked back from time to time, with a broad grin on his face, to see how they were taking it all. Well, they were taking it very philosophically: both father and daughter were thicker-skinned than the common run of men and women.

When they arrived at Peterhoff, they passed into the imperial grounds; and Captain Willing coolly lighted a cigar.

“’Ouldn’t it be better for ye not to smoke?” said Sal: “ye may git into trouble wi’ the p’leece agin.”

“D’ye call this yere a street, lass?” asked Joey.

And he puffed away.

“The lady’s remark is wise for all that,” said a voice beside them, in the purest English.

“I would advise you not to smoke, sir: smoking is strictly prohibited here.”

They both turned round, and saw a young man in plain clothes, both tall and handsome. Joey stared at him. What countryman? Surely not a Russian? An Englishman?

"That 'ere beat hivery think—that 'ere do!" exclaimed Joey, putting out his cigar. "I niver see sich a queer country in all my born days. There be a lawr agin' this yere, and a lawr agin' that 'ere, till there's nothink skeerce left as one can do. Next think, there'll be a lawr agin' heating, shouldn't wonder: though, mind ye, I 'ouldn't grumble if so be as there was a lawr agin' drinkin'; leastways, agin' drinkin' hanythink stronger nor water or weak tay. The queerest lot of people too as iver I see; and the queerest of the wole lot's the Himp'rer hissen'."

"How so?"

The stranger was evidently struck with Joey, and could see that he had a character before him: Joey looked hard at him, and asked:

"Be ye a Hinglishman?"

"No, sir."

"I'd skeerce ha' guessed from yer lingo as ye was a for'ner: ye speaks as good Hinglish as mysen'."

The stranger smiled and said :

“Do you call a Russian a foreigner in Russia ?”

“Ay, ay, I forgot as we was not in Hingland,” answered Joey. “Be ye a Rooshan, then ?”

“Certainly : though I have more German than Russian blood in my veins.”

“Anyhow, ye be a Rooshan subjeck ?”

“If you had asked me last year, I should have answered ‘Yes,’” said the stranger, laughing.

“I sees how it be : ye’ve changed your ’legiance. It were the wisest thing ye could ha’ done : I ’ouldn’t be a Rooshan subjeck ; no, not if ye guv’ me all the mines in Siberiar. Well, then, sin’ ye ain’t a Rooshan subjeck, I doesn’t mind a-tellin’ on ye——”

“I do not wish to have your confidence under false pretences,” interrupted the stranger : “I am a full Russian.” Then, to change the subject, he added : “Would you like to see the house which Peter the Great built with his own hands ?”

“Whereabouts be it ?”

“Close by.”

And they walked on to the house.

"Ay, that 'ere were sum'at like a man!" exclaimed Joey, in a tone of admiration.

"What did he do, fayther?" asked Sal.

"Why, lass, though he were a Himp'rer, he larnt a trade, and worked at 'un. He larnt to build a ship, and to sail 'un too. Wery different from the small indiwidgil as stand in his shoes at this yere momink!"

"I believe the present Emperor is a big man," said the stranger quietly.

"Ay; big in *body*."

"But not in mind?"

"It ain't al'ays as the two goes together. There were a for'n capt'n as I knowed in his sarvice——"

"Foreign in the sense of not English?"

"Ay, ay: a Rooshan for the matter o' that; as fine a feller as hiver I see—for a for'ner. And what d'ye think the Himp'rer done to 'un? Clapped 'un in quod, and packed 'un off to Siberiar, to put his talent into a napkin; leastways, if so be as there's napkins in Siberiar," added Joey in some doubt.

At this moment Captain Alexeyev came toward them. The stranger put his finger to his lips, and made a sign: and Alexeyev re-

mained at a respectful distance; though he really overheard what followed.

"I suppose that captain took part in the late rebellion," said the Russian.

"Ay, ay: ye've jist hit the right nail on the head."

"What would you have done to him?"

"If so be as I'd been Himp'rer, I'd ha' let 'un go, and told 'un: 'Ye jist go and be a good boy next time.'"

The stranger smiled and answered:

"I fear that's not the way to preserve order."

"I be capt'n of a ship—I be; and I ort to know sum'at about horder. If that 'ere Himp'ror o' yourn knowed his trade, he 'ouldn't ha' sent a fine young feller like that 'ere adrift, 'cause he were a little wild like at first: he would ha' broken 'un in, and put 'un into harness, and made 'un work like a good 'un."

Captain Alexeyev was nearly exploding with laughter at the utter unconsciousness with which Joey was "putting his foot into it," as he thought.

"Well," said the stranger, "we must agree to differ on this point: I must go now; but

that gentleman will show you over the place."

And he pointed to Captain Alexeyev.

"Next time I sees ye, happen ye'll ha' found a hanswer to them remarks o' mine," replied Joey.

Captain Alexeyev exploded at last.

"Good morning."

"Good mornin', sir ; leastways, harternoon, as I take it to be. Thankin' ye for yer kindness."

As soon as the stranger had disappeared, Captain Alexeyev greeted them, and asked :

"Know who that is ?"

"No, Captain : a dacent chap anyhow."

"The Emperor."

"Avast !"

"Ye doan't say so !" cried Sal : "oh, fayther, what'll become o' ye ?"

Alexeyev expected to extract no end of fun from Captain Willing's fears. He was wholly disappointed. Joey's "Avast" had been the jolliest of the whole brotherhood. He roared till his sides ached.

"I guv' it 'un—didn't I, Sal ?" he cried with great glee. "I pitched into 'un—didn't I, lass ? That 'ere beat hivery think—

that 'ere do ! The Himp'rer ? The himp'rence ! ”

To his dying day, Joey was never tired of telling how he had “pitched into the Himp'rer, and took the shine out on 'un.” “And he couldn't hanswer me,” he would always add : “I shut 'un up reg'lar ! ” To tell you the truth, he was no little proud of the encounter.

Under Captain Alexeyev's guidance he and his daughter saw everything that was to be seen at Peterhoff. It was late in the day when they returned to Petersburg ; but Joey would not retire to his lodgings, could not rest, till he had given Mr. Cameron and Helen a detailed account of his little tussle “wi' that 'ere Himp'rer o' yourn.”

CHAPTER XX.

A CROW CROSSES MAJESTY'S PATH.

"The joyful and the sorrowful are there. . . . Gay mansions, with supper-rooms and dancing-rooms, are full of light and music and high-swelling hearts: but in the condemned cells the pulse of life beats tremulous and faint; and blood-shot eyes look out through the darkness which is around and within for the light of a stern last morning."

CARLYLE: *Sartor Resartus*.

THE five "most guilty" of the rebels were executed.

When the tragedy was over, Russia gave herself up to unbounded joy. Her young Emperor went to her old capital to be crowned. The sombre streets of Moscow wore a strangely lively look. All Russia seemed to be crowding into it; and travellers came from every part of Europe. Wherever Majesty appeared, shouts of welcome rent the air: "Long live the Emperor!"

In the midst of this motley throng Majesty was driving one day, with the Empress beside him in the carriage, and the Grand Duke Constantine in the seat opposite. Shouts of welcome redoubled: enthusiasm for Majesty growing. But soon their progress was arrested

by a dense crowd in front, hurrahing and shouting—not “Long live the Emperor!” Some rival attraction to Majesty? Renewal of treasonable cries?

Scene not without its annoyance. The police had received strict orders to clear the streets whenever Majesty approached; and, up to this time, spite of difficulties, had succeeded better than might have been hoped. First hitch in the proceedings! A power higher than police, higher even than Majesty; the power of the people, mostly asserting itself in a vague, wavering, helpless sort of way, but making itself felt whenever the great popular heart was stirred;—had paralysed the force. Nay, policemen but men; perhaps sharing the popular feeling! “Hath not a policeman eyes? Hath not a policeman hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?” I rather think some of the policemen themselves were shouting “Hurrah,” when they ought to have been removing the barrier in Majesty’s path. For the moment, Majesty was unheeded; in fact, eclipsed by the rival attraction.

Not a pleasant feeling for Majesty: Majesty’s brow clouded over. Imperial Highness in a dreadful rage: face, scowling; brow, con-

tracted; eyes, shooting forth flames of fire. Woe be to Christian policemen; to official partakers of popular feeling!

"Flog them all round, from the captain down to the meanest member of the force!" exclaimed the Grand Duke Constantine in a dreadful voice.

"What if they could not help it?" said the Empress.

"They *ought* to have helped it."

Captain Alexeyev was riding by the side of the carriage; and Majesty ordered him to go forward and find out the cause of the commotion.

"It is the wonderful English barishnia," said Alexeyev when he returned.

Majesty became thoughtful.

"What English mademoiselle?" asked the Empress in French.

"Mademoiselle Cameron on her way to Siberia."

"Who is this Mademoiselle Cameron, your Majesty?" asked Constantine, still frowning.

"The daughter of an English merchant, who has fallen in love with one of the conspirators."

“And you have allowed her to follow him to Siberia?”

And Constantine’s frown became fiercer.

“Yes, brother.”

“Your Majesty is too lenient by half,” cried Imperial Highness fiercely: “if I had been in your Majesty’s place, I would have roasted them all.”

“If we had leapt out of the frying-pan into the fire,” muttered Captain Alexeyev: “thank goodness, frying-pan not hot enough to roast, even with Imperial fire by its side.”

Presently they caught sight of a carriage drawn by living men. The crowd had insisted on taking out the horses, and drawing “the noble English barishnia” to her hotel. In the carriage sat Helen and Mrs. Cameron (late Lady Romford) facing the human horses, with Mr. Cameron and Sal opposite, and Vanka on the box by the driver’s side. Enthusiasm of the crowd not to be kept in. Regardless of Majesty, on all sides rose shouts which rent the air: “Long live the good English Barishnia!”

Enthusiasm of crowd but a sample of the welcome which Helen Cameron had received ever since she left St. Petersburg. Thus far

her journey had been one long triumphal march. Wherever she appeared, the news of her coming had gone before her. The story of her devotion to an exile had touched the great national heart. Strong men had come, and with stifled sobs bent their manhood before her. Women had brought their babies to be blessed by one who knew so well how to bless. Scarcely a village, where crowds had not come out to welcome her. And one and all they had cried: "Long live the good English Barishnia! The Lord bless the noble English Barishnia!"

At first, Helen had been somewhat overcome by the great national appreciation of her deed; but she was getting used to it now. Mrs. Cameron never could get used to it: at every fresh repetition her eyes filled with tears, and her heart with loving pride. Sal was puzzled: were those beaming, rejoicing, shouting men and women fair samples of the cannon-balls she was to knock down? Wait a bit, Miss Willing: not in "Siberiar" yet!

Perhaps Mr. Cameron was the one that was really the most moved. The object of the national worship was his own daughter: that was the national response to the deed he had

stamped as foolish. At first, he had felt awkward and out of place : the ringing shouts had jarred upon his ears. His wife too had given him a look which to his conscience said : “What do you think of yourself now ?” But, as the enthusiasm heightened day by day, he himself seemed to catch it, and to doubt the orthodoxy of his old creed. Had not his judgment been a narrow one ? Was not the deed, which could so move a nation’s heart, heroic and great ? Instead of blaming his daughter for “throwing herself away on a beggar of a convict,” ought he not to be proud of her ?

What followed, I think, gave the *coup de grâce* to his old creed, and installed the new one in its room. The two processions (Emperor’s and Exile’s) clashing in the street, both come to a stand-still. Which was to give way, and allow the other to pass ? The *vox populi* pronounced in favour of Exile. Majesty overlooked ; while the air still rang with shouts of “Long live the good English barishnia !” But could Majesty give way without demeaning himself ? Majesty soon settled the question in a way which amazed Imperial Highness.

Majesty was wise : knew how to put himself in

the forefront of public opinion; like Richard II., could head the mob, and bring it round to himself. So, at this time, he resolved to become the spokesman of the great popular heart. He alighted from his carriage, and walked up to Mr. Cameron's. Helen at once recognised him: she could not easily forget the champion who had stood by her at Princess Donskaya's ball, and had since befriended her.

Of course, every one knew who he was. But public opinion was divided as to the step he took. The great mass were deeply moved, and shouted lustily. But there were not a few old fogies who shook their heads, or shrugged their shoulders, and thought it was "not quite the thing" for Majesty to do such honour to a merchant's daughter. As for Imperial Highness, he looked alarmed: what folly might not the young man be guilty of next? Majesty justified his worst forebodings. Coming up to Mr. Cameron's carriage, he took off his hat, made a low bow, and said to Helen in Russ:

"In the name of Russia, in the name of my people, in the name of fifty millions, I do you homage. There are scores who have deserted their friends in this unhappy affair; but, as

far as I know, there is only one who has resolved to bury herself in Siberia for the sake of a man who had not the slightest claim on her."

Majesty's voice, strong and deep, rang clear through the crowd; and thousands heard his speech. There was one mighty shout of applause: cries of "Long live the Emperor!" blended with "Long live the good English Barishnia!" Mrs. Cameron glanced with pride at her husband. But, in her gentle eyes, Mr. Cameron read the words: "What do you think of yourself now?" Well, to tell the truth, he thought no great things of himself. Was not his old creed indeed heterodox?

In the meanwhile, midst all the excitement around her, Helen remained quite calm.

"Your Majesty has been misinformed," she answered gravely: "the man whom I am proud to follow to Siberia twice saved my life."

"You must be proud to own such a daughter, sir," said Nicholas in English to Mr. Cameron.

Poor Mr. Cameron felt overwhelmed: his old heterodox creed had by this time been so completely shattered that it humbled him to

think of the way in which he had treated Helen's heroic resolve. His heart was full; and he quite broke down.

"I *am* proud of her, your Majesty!" he cried. "But I have to confess that I opposed her resolve."

"It was natural for a father not to relish the thought of his daughter going to Siberia," said Helen.

"And are you going to accompany her to Siberia now?" continued the Emperor.

"I am sorry to say, your Majesty, my business will not allow me to go further than Moscow."

"Miss Cameron must not be allowed to go unattended," said Nicholas. Then turning round to his suite, he added: "Which of you gentlemen would win the high honour of accompanying this beautiful and heroic young lady to Siberia?"

Several noblemen and gentlemen sprang forward and volunteered for the service: Helen's story had touched high as well as low; and Helen's beauty, now shining in unwonted loveliness before them, drew all hearts. There was an *embarras de richesses*. Whom was Majesty to choose?

But here Captain Alexeyev, who had stepped forward with the rest, said :

“Have first claim, your Majesty : Monsieur Maleenovsky my dearest friend.”

“I leave it to Mademoiselle Cameron to choose.”

“Then I choose Captain Alexeyev.”

How the captain’s heart fluttered !

“Ten thousand thanks, mademoiselle.”

“There is only one objection to your choice,” said Majesty : “his rank is scarcely high enough.”

“Easily remedied,” said Alexeyev coolly.

“Very true, *Colonel Alexeyev*,” answered the Emperor, laughing outright.

“Humbly thank your Majesty.”

“Thank Mademoiselle Cameron ; you owe your promotion to her : though you have given me satisfaction since her countrywoman took you in hand ; and, if Mademoiselle Cameron exert as good an influence on your friend, we may hope to see him restored to his country’s service. But for that hope I should grudge to bestow such a treasure on a rebel.”

“I know he is loyal to your Majesty at heart,” said Helen quietly in English.

“I will not stop to argue with a lady in

your position," answered Nicholas gallantly :
"I wish you well : farewell, Miss Cameron !"

And the Emperor turned to go away. The air rang with shouts of applause.

"God bless your Majesty !" cried Helen earnestly after him ; "and reward you for your generosity."

Majesty turned to the human horses harnessed to the carriage, and gave the word of command :

"Forward !—Make room there in front !"

The policemen with their halberds quickly cleared a passage ; and Helen Cameron went on her way to Siberia. As she passed the Imperial carriage, the Empress bent toward her, and said in her own sweet voice :

"The Lord go with you, Helen Cameron !"

Helen was more touched by that than by the Emperor's flattering speech. What had she done that all hearts, high and low, should thus be drawn to her ?

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MEETING.

"No chance for a man to come out strong."

DICKENS: *Martin Chuzzlewit.*

COLONEL ALEXEYEV carried out his mission with a chivalrous devotion which, in a man of his easy morals, it was refreshing to see. In his loose, harum-scarum character there was (spite of his *persiflage* and his cynical philosophy) one fixed principle: faithfulness to friendship. He admired Helen more than any woman he had ever seen; but he would not have wronged Captain Maleenovsky for all the world. Often sorely tempted to take advantage of his position, he behaved toward Helen throughout with distant and chivalrous courtesy. Helen, in her simplicity, begged him to take a seat in her comfortable carriage. But he would not; and so day and night he was dreadfully jolted in the wretched little springless post-carts which the government supplied.

Again, they found that Helen Cameron's fame had gone before her; and everywhere they received the same enthusiastic welcome

as at first. As they went on, they daily diminished the distance between them and the exiles. At the last stage from Neejny-Novgorod, the station-master informed them that he could furnish them with no horses, as the last had been chartered for "the unfortunates." Colonel Alexeyev knew what that meant. There is always a pair of horses held in reserve for cases of sudden emergency. None could touch these "feld-jäger" horses, as they are called, without a special order from the government. But Majesty had given him the order; and he did not scruple to lay sacrilegious hands on the sacred pair. As no horse was left for his own wretched little post-cart, he was perforce uplifted to the seat of honour—Helen's carriage.

As they whirled along, he wondered how he could best tell Helen that the commander of the exiles was her ancient suitor—Prince Boriatinsky. Why he had been chosen I don't know. Had he found another Captain Hawkins in the courtly circles of St. Petersburg? Or was it to allow society time to forget that he wore a wig; to enable him to return in a year or two and dazzle the fashionable world by the luxuriance of his hair? Alexeyev might have spared himself all anxiety:

Helen was so absorbed in the thought of meeting Maleenovsky, that the announcement of Prince Boriatinsky's supreme master would not have quickened her pulse very much. It never struck her that she, as well as Captain Maleenovsky, might be in Prince Boriatinsky's power.

Close to Neejny-Novgorod they overtook a file of common carts, filled with men in coats of coarse grey cloth. Seeing the exiles, Alexeyev ordered the driver to stop; and the hindmost carts stopped likewise. The fact was, the fame of the wonderful maiden had reached the last station. Drivers, as well as exiles, had expected to be overtaken. They all knew who the beautiful lady was. As usual, a loud shout of welcome greeted her.

Alexeyev was told that Prince Boriatinsky had gone on, and that the exiles were then under the command of a Mr. Koorbaatov. Embryo-diplomatist?

Colonel Alexeyev knew him; and, if it were he, all might be well. They went on at a gentle trot along the line of carts. As they passed, the shouts grew. What Helen usually received was the homage of the crowd. But here were some of the greatest men that Russia

could boast of: in talent, in culture, in birth. And, one and all, they showered blessings on her head.

Meanwhile, the news had spread to the front; and Mr. Koorbaatov came to judge for himself. One look at his face and figure enough to show that it was indeed embryo-diplomatist: a little manlier, perhaps, than of yore, but still as sprucely dressed and dandified as if he were not about to waste his sweetness on the desert air of—Siberia. He came smirking and smiling, according to his wont, and, before Colonel Alexeyev could address him, approached the carriage, and said in French (he was learning wisdom in the school of diplomacy):

“In what way can I serve you, mademoiselle?”

“Will you allow me to speak to Captain Maleenovsky?”

There was a painful little struggle in embryo-diplomatist's mind. Why not have beautiful Haidee all to himself? What a charming opportunity for playing the lover while highness was away! But, on the other hand, Helen's story had touched his heart; and, for Helen Cameron's sake he had been kind to

Captain Maleenovsky, as far as fear of highness allowed. So there was a little battle between generosity and selfishness. Generosity won the day. Highness would be angry when he heard of it. But what of that? Out of sight, out of mind. Highness was not there, with his ugly heels, to kick him: *mademoiselle* *was* there, with her beautiful eyes, to thank him.

“With pleasure, *mademoiselle*.”

Mr. Koorbaatov ordered the whole file of carts to stop; and Helen's carriage moved on. Helen herself was in a flutter. It seemed an age to her before they could come up to Captain Maleenovsky.

Her thoughts were somewhat diverted from her private concerns by a strong manly voice, which said in the purest English, and with the deepest feeling:

“God bless you, Miss Cameron, and reward you for your noble self-sacrifice!”

Helen's eyes grew dim. So sweet to hear her own dear mother-tongue in the very heart of Russia! But who was she that such things should be said of her? She had not thought of self-sacrifice: she had simply obeyed the prompting of her heart. What need of re-

ward? Her deed was its own reward, and brought its own joy.

She was anxious to press forward; but there was something so noble in the look and bearing of the speaker, that she felt forced to stop. Ah, there were noble spirits beside Captain Maleenovsky involved in that dreadful failure! She asked Alexeyev who the speaker was.

“Highness, Count Golovin,” was the answer: “‘terrible Count Golovin.’ Seen him only once before, mademoiselle; but, once seen, never forgotten.”

Helen had a reverence for the very name of Golovin. With such society, Siberia was shorn of half its terrors.

“The sacrifice is not on my part,” she answered, “but on yours. I can only echo back your wish: God bless and reward your Highness!”

“No more ‘highness,’” answered Count Golovin: “I have been degraded from my rank, and am a simple gentleman.”

“Is not that the higher rank of the two?” asked Helen simply.

The low-born Radical!

“A nobleman of God’s making nevertheless,” said another voice, also in English.

It was a sweet musical voice, almost womanly in some of its upper tones. Helen looked at the speaker, and, in spite of the coarse grey convict dress, saw one of the most refined-looking gentlemen she had ever seen in all her life. Wonder upon wonders! Would there be any sacrifice at all in spending her life in such society? But who could the speaker be?

"Highness, Prince Olènin," whispered Colonel Alexeyev, in answer to her eager look.

"There he is!" cried Helen suddenly.

And there he was, sure enough, walking toward the carriage! In a great flutter, Helen tried to jump out. But Colonel Alexeyev kindly prevented her, and helped her to alight in more orthodox style. Captain Maleenovsky had nearly forestalled him, though: he stood by the side of the carriage, stretching out his arms towards Helen; and, with a wild outburst of joy, she fell plump into his arms, and threw her own round his neck. There were few dry eyes in that high-born and refined company.

For a long time not a word was spoken on either side. A striking sight: those two lovers folded in a dumb embrace, before a number of men looking on as speechless as themselves.

“God bless you, my own!” Maleenovsky at length said in English: “My own! My own!”

“Yours, Alexander, in life and in death!” answered Helen. “Joy, joy, to be with you!”

“Oh, Helen, I rejoice too; and yet, when I think of all you have sacrificed——”

“Sacrifice!” cried Helen, interrupting him. “You all talk of sacrifice! What sacrifice is it to go with the one you love the most in all the world? Home is where he is: the sacrifice would be to keep away from home.”

“But Siberia——”

“Is not Kamschatka, thank God! Siberia is—Siberia: our future home, Alexander! Is not that thought enough to brighten Siberia?”

“You brave girl!”

At this point Count Golovin said:

“We welcome you with pride, Miss Cameron; and there are some of us specially proud of the fact that an Englishwoman has done us the honour of joining us.”

“I for one,” said Prince Olènin.

“How delighted my wife will be to make your acquaintance!” Count Golovin added with deep feeling: “She is as heroic as your-

self, Miss Cameron : she is coming after me ; if she can secure your friendship, I shall not fear for her."

And Count Golovin looked at Helen in a way which touched her deeply.

"I shall be delighted to make her acquaintance," she answered. "It seems Siberia will not be so dreary a place after all."

"With the princess and Miss Cameron to boast of," said Prince Olènin gallantly, "I fancy that Tchitah will be a formidable rival to Petersburg."

Tchitah, the little town in Siberia where the exiles were to live for some years.

While this conversation was going on, Alexeyev had accosted Maleenovsky. He had long been looking wistfully at his old friend ; but Maleenovsky's hands were so full, that he had kept in the background. As soon, however, as Golovin and Olènin took up Helen's attention, he had stepped forward. Not without a touch of fear : would not his friend think that he had deserted him in his trouble?

"You here ?" cried Maleenovsky.

And the two friends rushed into one another's arms, and kissed each other, as if they had been women.

“Yes, old friend,” answered Colonel Alexeyev, laughing through his tears. “Deserted you long enough. Rats returning to sinking ship, and all that.”

“Ah, Mademoiselle Cameron told me all about it. God bless you for your faithful friendship!”

A queer expression came over Alexeyev’s face.

“Looked like it—didn’t it, old fellow? Not to see you once whilst you were in prison! A fellow who would have been in prison himself many a time but for you!”

And Alexeyev sobbed aloud.

“Dear old boy!” cried Maleenovsky.

“Faith in me pretty considerably shaken—eh, old fellow! Sucked the orange dry, and would not even keep the peel!”

“Well, I thought it hard till she told me all. But how come you to be here?”

“Came with her as her knight-attendant.”

“Have you left his Majesty’s service, then?”

“Wish you may get it? Why, old boy, Majesty sent me with Mademoiselle Cameron.”

“I can’t make that out.”

“No? O you rebels!” cried Alexeyev,

laughing. "Impossible for Majesty to do a generous thing—eh?"

"But explain it."

By this time Count Golovin and Prince Olènin were listening to the talk of the two friends, and seemed deeply interested in it. Colonel Alexeyev, still laughing, went on:

"Should have seen the sight: worth seeing. Majesty, in all the pomp of new-born dignity, driving in one direction, with a crowd around him: mademoiselle, in all the splendour of beauty, driving in the opposite direction, with another crowd around her. Hey, presto! Majesty and mademoiselle come into collision in the streets. Crowd fronts crowd; and mademoiselle fronts Majesty. A deadlock: Majesty checkmated. What is to be done? Majesty can't sit all day in his carriage, staring at mademoiselle! An awkward situation! What does Majesty do? He jumps down from his carriage, hat in hand, stands bareheaded before mademoiselle, and in the hearing of thousands says to her: 'In the name of Russia, in the name of my people, in the name of fifty millions, I do you homage. There are scores who have deserted their friends in this unhappy affair; but, as far as I know, there is

only one who has resolved to bury herself in Siberia for the sake of a man who has not the slightest claim on her.' ”

Captain Maleenovsky felt his eyes grow dim: he clutched Helen, and pressed her to his heart. Rebel as he was, he had all his life had reverence for authority; and to think that his Helen should have been so recognised and appreciated by the sovereign against whom he had appeared in arms!

“Were those the *ipsissima verba* which his Majesty used?” he asked.

“The very words. Not likely to forget the speech in a hurry: made too deep an impression on me. Will write it down to teach it to my children (when I get them) as a model of eloquence. Meanwhile, registered in my brain.”

“And what answer did mademoiselle give his Majesty?” asked Prince Olènin.

“‘Your Majesty has been misinformed,’ she said promptly: ‘the man, whom I am proud to follow to Siberia, twice saved my life.’”

“O my Helen!” exclaimed Captain Maleenovsky, pressing her still closer to his heart.

“I always thought his Majesty was a noble man,” said Prince Olènin.

"I *knew* it," responded Count Golovin.

"A pretty confession for rebels to make!" cried Colonel Alexeyev, laughing: "after doing your best to hurl him off his throne!"

"To think that *you* should follow me to Siberia!" exclaimed Maleenovsky, looking adoringly at Helen.

"If she had *not* followed you, think Majesty would have spoken to her like that?" said Alexeyev. "Can't *eat* one's cake and keep it too, you know."

"Captain Alexeyev——" began Count Golovin.

"*Colonel*, if you please."

"I congratulate you, old fellow!" exclaimed Captain Maleenovsky warmly, grasping Alexeyev's hand; "but how have you so quickly earned a second promotion?"

"Doubtless by services rendered on the day of the revolt," suggested one of the exiles.

"No, sir," answered Alexeyev proudly. "Not ashamed of my rank: given me in honour of Mademoiselle Cameron, when Majesty entrusted her to my charge."

"And nobly and chivalrously you have fulfilled your trust," said Helen warmly.

“Proud to have earned your approval, mademoiselle.”

“Oh, Alexander, I can’t tell you how nobly he has acted! If he had been my own brother, he could not have behaved more thoughtfully and kindly.”

“Ah, old boy, I always knew you had a warm heart, in spite of your——”

“Lapsing into sentimentalism—eh? Have a pipe, old fellow: best cure going.”

“You must have one with me, then: you need it quite as much.”

Vanka had been hovering about them for some time, trying to catch his old master’s eye. Captain Maleenovsky had hitherto been too busy to notice him. But he caught sight of him at last, and held out his hand.

“Thou here too, Vanka?” he exclaimed in a tone of astonishment. “Why, it seems as if one must travel to Siberia to meet all one’s old friends.”

Vanka had seized his hand and kissed it passionately.

“Oh, baarin, baarin!” he cried sobbing.

“How comest thou to be here, Vanka?”

“You see, baarin, I could not bear the thought of your going without me; and I

thought you would like me to be of use to the barishnia on the way, to see that she came to no harm. So I offered myself to her as a servant; and here I am, baarin, ready to spill the last drop of my blood for you."

Captain Maleenovsky was deeply touched.

"I think the world has suddenly grown kind," he said with quivering lips.

Mr. Koorbaatov had been watching this scene rather nervously. He had stretched his responsibility to the utmost. Would not highness be in a rage? He was in for it, that was clear. Time to put a stop to it. So he begged all to take their seats, and go on.

"I am much obliged to you," said Helen with a bewitching smile.

The smile went straight to the soft young fellow's heart. Was there no hope? The simpleton!

"Beautiful Haidee——"

"You forget that my name is Cameron," interrupted Helen gravely, smiling no more.

"I am glad that the roses have returned to your cheek," continued Mr. Koorbaatov.

"I mean to cultivate the roses in Siberia," answered Helen, laughing: "that is to say, if

they will grow there," she added, rather doubtfully.

"Wherever you are, there is sure to be a rose," said embryo-diplomatist gallantly.

How proud he was of that pretty speech for days and weeks afterward !

Maleenovsky bade Helen farewell, and was about to return to his cart, when an unlooked-for event caused a further delay. The story of Helen Cameron had reached the town of Neejny-Novgorod : crowded with strangers from all parts of the world ; the great yearly Fair, famous throughout the world, being held there at the time. The excitement of that motley crowd ! The rumour, that the English barishnia was just outside the town, was the spark which set on fire the latent combustible materials of the place. There was an explosion. Men left their shops and stalls to take care of themselves : did they think no thieves would be left behind to plunder ? Merchants and mojecks, men, women, and children, rushed out, helter-skelter, on to the Petersburg road.

As soon as they caught sight of the carriage, they raised a loud shout of welcome : "The Lord bless the noble English barishnia !" Nothing could check their enthusiasm. They

insisted on unyoking the horses, and drawing Helen Cameron into the town. Strange to say, Captain Malcenovsky did not seem to dislike sharing "his own" with thousands of others. What use to speak of the pride with which he looked on this national recognition of the brave girl he called his own? His eyes grew dim: his lips quivered: and his voice was more shaky than became a soldier and a hero. Off trotted the human horses, and, through streets densely crowded with human beings who kept up a running cheer, carried Helen to her lodgings.

Once there, she sat down on a chair and burst into tears: so worn-out with travel and excitement, that she was thoroughly unstrung. Alexeyev did not know what to make of it: his face had a puzzled look which was comical. What to do in such a ticklish state of things? Sal rushed up to her, and applied a bottle of her namesake to her nose.

"The 'tarnal din which these yere people do keep up!" she exclaimed: "quite deafening!"

"Think it is that?" asked Alexeyev.

"I wish to goodness them cannon-balls 'ould coom," continued Sal: "they could not make so much noise. No wonder it hev' knocked

ye down, dear miss; it's enough to tumble down the walls of Jericho. Them cannon-balls couldn't do it neater."

At length Alexeyev said to Helen in French :

"Anything I can do for you, mademoiselle?"

"Nothing, thanks."

"Wish you would look on me as your brother, mademoiselle: to be *his* wife, you know!"

Helen's tears flowed fast.

"You are very good to me," she answered, sobbing: "every one is good to me. I scarcely dare trust myself to speak of your delicacy and your unwearied kindness to me. But God will reward you. God bless you, *my brother*! Yes, I will look on you as a brother: a noble self-sacrificing brother you have been to me!"

And she held out her hand. Had she divined that he loved her; that nothing but a sense of duty to his friend could have made him treat her with such chivalrous delicacy?

Colonel Alexeyev seized the hand outstretched, and kissed it passionately. Helen had spoken with so much earnestness, that he was deeply moved. Not a man of deep feeling;

but this was a crisis to call forth all that there was in him. He was lifted above himself. I fear he had forgotten that there was such a being as Rachel Randal in this strange disjointed world. His love for Helen was struggling with his better nature.

What the issue of the struggle? There was a deep silence for a while; and, when he spoke, his utterance seemed choked with feeling.

"Like to have a private interview with him, *my sister?*" he said.

Helen's face beamed with joy through her tears.

"Can I?" she cried.

"No knowing."

Then, perhaps dimly understanding what a battle had just been fought, and what a victory won, Helen added, smiling sweetly through her tears:]

"God bless you, dear brother!"

Colonel Alexeyev fell back upon his old flippant bantering style: a sure sign, I think, that the crisis was over, and the battle won. All honour to the scapegrace!

"Not sure," he said. "Can't be done without highness: highness very likely overshadowed by memory of wig! Unlucky article of

bodily furniture! Mean to go at once, and knock it out of his cranium; if possible, without knocking out teeth, or disarranging luxuriant locks. Other business in town: shan't be back very soon. *Au revoir, mademoiselle! Ma chère sœur!*”

“You are a noble man!” cried Helen.

She was moved through and through by his generous forbearance.

“*Est-il possible?*” said Alexeyev. “Thank your friend Captain Maleenovsky and your other friend Mademoiselle Randal, for the little good that there is in this worthless carcase of mine.” He laughed, and added: “How could you do it, sister?”

Helen was slightly alarmed.

“Do what?” she asked.

“Do what, indeed? Why, pluck the luxuriant locks off highness's venerable head! See what a mess you have made of it! Unveiling of roofless sacred shrine will cause you many a heart-ache yet. A righteous retribution! How could you do it?”

With these words he went away laughing.

And here I bid farewell for the present to Helen Cameron.

It may interest the reader to know that Prince Boriatinsky was soon superseded, and that his successor was a gentleman though not a prince.

The summer following, Helen sent a beautiful rose to Joey Willing; and the old tar gladly acknowledged that "a certain party" had "stuck to his barg'n."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CURTAIN DROPS.

“ And so these twain, upon the skirts of time,
Sit side by side, full-summ’d in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each, and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other even as those who love.”

TENNYSON: *The Princess*.

WHEN the present Emperor of Russia, Alexander II., came of age, in 1839, his father Nicholas remitted the sentence of the exiles.

One morning in February, 1840, Mr. Cameron received a letter, from which it appeared that his daughter might be expected in St. Petersburg that very day. In the fulness of his joy he spread the news; and friends flocked to his house to welcome back Helen Cameron that was.

They were shown into the breakfast-room; the room that Helen used to love so well. There was a blazing fire in the English grate to welcome the travellers. The guests sat round chatting, calling up old memories: all hearts drawn toward her who had left that

comfortable home more than a dozen years before, to rough it in the world, to succour a stricken man. You may be sure that her old faults were forgotten now; that none but holy memories gathered round the name of Helen Cameron, as they still loved to call her.

Many a glance was cast at the windows: and many a false alarm was given, especially by the youngsters; for there were young as well as old, and even children whom Helen had never seen. Mothers had told her story to the children on their knees; and her name was, in every sense, a "holy memory" in that company. "Dear good Aunt Helen!"

At length the great gates of the courtyard were flung open; and two large travelling sledges came in sight. Such excitement in the room! All but two crowded to the windows. Eyes filled with tears; and wistful glances were cast at the foremost sledge to catch sight of the dear wanderer. Mr. Cameron scampered off as if he were a boy, to meet his daughter at the door. His wife followed him more leisurely.

When Mr. Cameron opened the outer door, a fine tall gentleman was handing down from the sledge a tall stately lady, so muffled up in

furs that it would have been hard for him to say who she was. But of course he knew it was his daughter; and he at once folded the bundle of furs, just as it was, to his heart.

"Welcome home, my darling Helen!" he cried: "welcome to your old father's heart and home!"

And he sobbed aloud.

"O papa, papa! darling papa!" answered the big middle-aged woman from behind the furs, clinging to his breast. "Is it really true? How often I have dreamt of this when far away!"

As soon as Mr. Cameron had released Helen, his wife claimed her. Mr. Cameron, in the exuberance of his joy, embraced Captain Malecnovsky.

"Have you not a word to say to me?" said a female voice by his side: "Mr. Cameron!"

Mr. Cameron looked up and saw another tall female, also muffled up in furs.

"You are welcome to my house, madam, whoever you are," he said courteously.

The hands of the muffled figure untied the strings which fastened the all-enveloping cap to its head, and revealed the unmistakable features of Sal Willing.

“Oh, Mr. Cameron,” she said, laughing, “I am afraid you have a genius for forgetting old friends.”

So enlarged was Mr. Cameron’s heart at that moment by his unbounded joy, that he responded by throwing his arms round Sal’s neck and kissing her.

“Forget you!” he cried, sobbing again: “may my right hand forget its cunning before I forget the faithful, generous, noble Sal Willing! All you have been to me, through mine, these many years——O Sal, may God reward you; for I cannot!”

But there were other claimants on his notice. Helen presented to him a fine manly-looking boy, eleven years old, and said:

“Papa, this is your eldest grandson, Alexander.”

“Come into the hall,” said Mr. Cameron: “it is bitterly cold here.”

“I don’t feel cold at all,” answered Helen: “I think joy warms one up, papa.”

Still, she went into the hall, followed by all the other travellers. Alexander had to be embraced, and a string of other young ones.

In the hall the travellers took off their furs;

and Mr. and Mrs. Cameron had a chance of seeing what change time had made. Not much. Captain Maleenovsky looked manlier and more striking than ever in figure and in face—that was all. Helen too was stouter, statelier, and more matronly, than of old: but her beauty had not faded in the least; if anything, was more striking than ever, because mellower and more harmonious. The greatest change was in Sal. It seemed as if Helen had really succeeded in making a lady of her. She was too tall to be graceful; but there was such an improvement in point of refinement, that one almost missed the piquant Sal of old.

In the breakfast-room they found the company in a flutter of expectation. Nothing but delicacy had kept them from rushing out *en masse*, and hailing the travellers at the outer door.

“Need I introduce any of these friends to you, Helen?” said Mr. Cameron, leading his daughter in.

“Not this gentleman, at least,” answered Helen, holding out her hand to a handsome gentleman, with a smiling, good-humoured face, who stood nearest the door: “it is not likely that I should ever forget my noble

champion ; though Colonel Alexeyev may very easily have forgotten me."

The gentleman addressed gallantly kissed the outstretched hand, and answered smiling :

"General Count Alexeyev, if you please."

"Of course, your Highness, I had heard of your high honours and titles," answered Helen in a tone of apology ; "but old habit prevailed."

"And why 'your Highness?'" asked Alexeyev : "why not 'brother,' as of old?"

"Remember I come from Siberia, where a live count is hard to catch," said Helen.

"Siberia not frozen your effervescent spirits—eh?"

Helen had been looking at a handsome lady standing by Count Alexeyev's side. Surely Rachel Randal—that was ; and yet so much changed that Helen was not sure. Much stouter : sour pinched look about her gone. Well, Alexeyev had turned out a better husband than many had foreboded.

"The Countess, I think," said Helen courteously, holding out her hand to Rachel.

"Oh, Helen !" cried Rachel : "if you love me, call me 'Rachel,' as of old."

Helen's generous heart opened to the old

enemy-friend at once. She threw her arms round Rachel's neck.

"Yes, dear Rachel, with all my heart."

Rachel was sobbing away on Helen's shoulder.

"I have prayed to God for strength to subdue my pride," she said meekly. "Helen, dear, I never knew you till you were gone : I wronged you in my heart ; but I have long learnt to reverence you as the noblest woman I know."

"I have always thought of you as the Rachel whom I knew and loved in earlier days."

Rachel turned to a beautiful girl ten years old, and, pointing to Helen, asked her :

"Who is this ?"

"Dear good Aunt Helen," answered the child.

"And what is your name, my love ?" asked Helen, speaking to the child.

"Helen Cameron Alexeyev."

"And is this yours too ?"

And Helen pointed to a younger child.

"No, that is mine," said a familiar voice beside her.

Helen turned, and saw a gentleman, whom she would not have recognised but for his voice.

"I am delighted to see you again, Fred," she said warmly, shaking hands with him.

Fred looked rather sheepish, but welcomed her in spite of it. Helen kissed the child, and asked her what her name was.

"Helen Cameron Randal," was the answer.

Helen could not but be touched: her friends had not forgotten her when far away.

"Why, there seem to be none but Helen Camerons in the room," she said, smiling.

Fred turned to a very pretty, sweet, modest lady, who kept in the background at the side of him, and said:

"It is your doing—isn't it, dear?"

"Oh, Jenny, I did not see you!" exclaimed Helen, folding her cousin to her heart.

"Helen, my own darling!" answered Jenny: "thank God for this day! I feared I should never see you again: we have had a long, weary time of it without you."

In the meanwhile, Captain Maleenovsky had received his share of hearty welcome. His friend Alexeyev had kissed him again and again in warm Russian fashion: and the two friends were now engaged in talk; though even in that hour Alexeyev could not throw away his bantering style.

Helen heard him say :

“Remember Doubovitch, second chief of secret police? Used to laugh at the prim little man. Laugh at him no more : fall down and kiss his feet now. An invaluable little man : a jewel of a mannikin. Majesty sends him on roving mission to hunt out abuses ; and what do you think keen-scented mannikin finds out?”

“Who knows?” said Maleenovsky listlessly.

Such small talk ! So small after the tragedies in which he had borne a part ! The “crime” which he had just expiated by the waste of thirteen of the best years of his life in Siberia ! Nothing like a rough contact with the realities of life to shake men out of small talk. Old friend Alexeyev dwindling down into a bore ?

“Your lawsuit about Doobeenovka,” said bore.

Maleenovsky pricked up his ears : no more listlessness now ; old friend Alexeyev no longer a bore.

“Well ?”

Helen too began to listen with intense interest : none but she knew what a sore point

it was with her husband "to be dependent on his wife's fortune."

"Majesty orders sapient Senate to reconsider the case."

"Bravo!" cried Maleenovsky: "God bless his Majesty!"

"Thereupon a new light dawns upon collective cranium of sapient Senate. Collective cranium decides that Doobeenovka belongs to a certain rebel who shall be nameless."

"How is it I have not heard of this before?"

"You!" cried General Count Alexeyev, laughing heartily: "what have *you* to do with it? Property of rebels all confiscated, most learned rebel!"

Clear that Alexeyev still loved his joke dearly. Too bad, though, to tantalise his friend in that way! Helen thought so; for she came to the rescue.

"Brother, don't tease him any more," she said: "you don't know how deeply he feels on that point."

"Deserves to be punished," answered Alexeyev, laughing boisterously: "not half punished enough for rebelling against so noble an Emperor as ours."

"Oh, brother!" cried Helen, with deep

pathos: "a dozen years of his precious life in Siberia!"

"Call that punishment? A punishment to live in Siberia, or anywhere else, with the loveliest woman in Russia? Wouldn't have had her if he hadn't gone to Siberia."

And General Count Alexeyev nearly split his sides with laughing. Helen blushed, and was silent. But Captain Maleenovsky said gravely:

"What he says is quite true, darling. The great happiness of my life has been my punishment for joining the *Union*. My happiness began in prison, when an angel visited me."

"There now!" continued Alexeyev. "Should have been content at that time to work for life underground in the mines, if that 'angel' had shared my fate."

Helen glanced at Rachel: would she not be jealous? "At that time," Alexeyev was engaged to Rachel: how would she relish this raking up of the past? Well, she did not seem to mind it a bit. Not a touch of the old sourness on her face. Had she been reconverted? Had her husband's good humour, and her children's caresses, conjured the sourness away?

"Needn't be uneasy about my wife," said Alexeyev: "no secret; knows what I thought at that time. We understand each other: made her a more rabid Heleno-maniac than myself."

"But about Doobeenovka?"

"Needn't be anxious about it, sister: you have enough for both. Respected father, plain as he looks yonder," glancing at Mr. Cameron, "has gone on from wealth to wealth: property reckoned by millions now. Only child: what need for more? Husband indebted to you for everything else: just as well be indebted to you for his living."

"That I won't!" cried Maleenovsky with energy: "now that I am free, I can work."

Count Alexeyev threw his arms round his old friend's neck, and kissed him again.

"No need for that, old fellow," he said: "Majesty made an exception in your favour. Indefatigable little Doubovitch found out that verdict of High Court of Justice in your case was founded on report of two prejudiced individuals: Prince Boriatinsky and Judge Kokoshkin to wit. Had the whole case sifted: found you had only gone ankle-deep into treason. Thereupon Majesty hands over the estate to a certain individual who shall be nameless" (the

smile on his face “named” the “individual”), “to keep in trust till your return. Find your estate doubled in size, and more than doubled in value.”

Poor Maleenovsky could not speak: he could only press his friend’s hand in silence. Helen cast a glance at Count Alexeyev, which more than repaid him for all the trouble he must have taken. To create a diversion, she said:

“What has become of Prince Boriatinsky?”

“Never came across your path in Siberia?”

“Never.”

“Strange! Should have thought he would have turned to you like the needle to the pole, sister.”

The laugh was turned against Helen this time.

“Is he in Siberia, then?”

“Doubt it: must have entered your sphere by law of gravitation, if he were.”

“Is he supposed to be there?”

“Certainly. Unwearied little Doubovitch unearthed some disgraceful transactions of his: and Majesty banished him to Siberia for the remainder of his life. But who knows? Off go the locks, and out come the grinders; and

“In the same sense in which papa’s garden is the loveliest spot in St. Petersburg?” asked Helen archly.

“A sentimental boy still, you see!” said Alexeyev: “Siberia baffled in freezing the poetry out of him.”

Captain Maleenovsky turned to Mr. Cameron, who had been listening to the foregoing talk with quiet satisfaction, and eagerly grasped his hand.

“I have always done you justice, Mr. Cameron, as Helen can testify,” he said in English: “I have always said that you were right in objecting to your daughter’s ‘throwing herself away upon a beggar of a rebel.’”

“Nay, my son,” answered Mr. Cameron warmly, squeezing Captain Maleenovsky’s hand: “the womenkind drove that heresy out of my brain ages ago.”

“Thank God, I am no longer a beggar now!” exclaimed Captain Maleenovsky with passionate energy: “henceforth you need not be ashamed of your son-in-law.”

“Never *was* ashamed of you, my boy: always thought you a manly fellow, ‘as Helen can testify.’ I am glad, though, that you have property of your own.”

“And now, Helen, darling, the best thing we can do is to retire on our estate.”

Helen glanced at her father with a troubled look.

“Is it not rather early in the day to arrange your future plans?” suggested Mrs. Cameron.

“Besides,” put in Mr. Cameron, laughing, “I shall have a word to say to that: you, by your conjuring tricks, have charmed away my only child, and kept her away from me for thirteen years; and now, as soon as I have recovered her, you coolly talk of whisking her off again, without so much as saying ‘by your leave.’”

“I believe, dear Alexander, you will never be happy except in an active career,” said Helen.

“Wherever you are, I shall be happy, darling,” was the answer: “I was happy in Siberia.”

“That was because you could not help yourself; but, now that you are free, you would be fretting yourself with the thought that you are burying in idleness talents that might be serviceable to your country.”

“But what active career——”

“Active career lies before you, old fellow,”

“In the same sense in which papa’s garden is the loveliest spot in St. Petersburg?” asked Helen archly.

“A sentimental boy still, you see!” said Alexeyev: “Siberia baffled in freezing the poetry out of him.”

Captain Maleenovsky turned to Mr. Cameron, who had been listening to the foregoing talk with quiet satisfaction, and eagerly grasped his hand.

“I have always done you justice, Mr. Cameron, as Helen can testify,” he said in English: “I have always said that you were right in objecting to your daughter’s ‘throwing herself away upon a beggar of a rebel.’”

“Nay, my son,” answered Mr. Cameron warmly, squeezing Captain Maleenovsky’s hand: “the womenkind drove that heresy out of my brain ages ago.”

“Thank God, I am no longer a beggar now!” exclaimed Captain Maleenovsky with passionate energy: “henceforth you need not be ashamed of your son-in-law.”

“Never *was* ashamed of you, my boy: always thought you a manly fellow, ‘as Helen can testify.’ I am glad, though, that you have property of your own.”

“And now, Helen, darling, the best thing we can do is to retire on our estate.”

Helen glanced at her father with a troubled look.

“Is it not rather early in the day to arrange your future plans?” suggested Mrs. Cameron.

“Besides,” put in Mr. Cameron, laughing, “I shall have a word to say to that: you, by your conjuring tricks, have charmed away my only child, and kept her away from me for thirteen years; and now, as soon as I have recovered her, you coolly talk of whisking her off again, without so much as saying ‘by your leave.’”

“I believe, dear Alexander, you will never be happy except in an active career,” said Helen.

“Wherever you are, I shall be happy, darling,” was the answer: “I was happy in Siberia.”

“That was because you could not help yourself; but, now that you are free, you would be fretting yourself with the thought that you are burying in idleness talents that might be serviceable to your country.”

“But what active career——”

“Active career lies before you, old fellow,”

said Alexeyev : " Majesty wishes to see you."

Captain Maleenovsky was agitated : his lips quivered ; and his voice was shaky. After all the past, was there really a chance of his being employed in his country's service again ? Now, as always, the highest aim of his ambition !

" What is his Majesty's object ? "

" Means to employ your talents in a high office now vacant, old fellow. Charged me to tell you that he has long known your power ; and, as for character, that a man for whom a woman could give up all, must have something in him."

" His Majesty is deep."

Alexeyev turned to Helen, and went on to say :

" As to you, sister, both their Majesties beg you to present yourself at the Winter Palace."

Helen turned scarlet.

" Me ? What for ? "

" Want to know and honour a woman who could sacrifice ' all for love. ' "

" Precious little sacrifice there was ! " cried Helen. " Why, the happiest years of my

life have been those spent in Siberia. Every one was so overwhelmingly kind to me, that I must have been a wretch myself to be wretched there."

The young folks had retired under the charge of Jenny and Sal. But Sal had returned in time to hear the last sentences.

"How could any one be unkind to *you*?" she said: "you take happiness with you wherever you go; and of course you cannot help being happy yourself. But you must go to the Winter Palace, Helen. I shouldn't mind going myself: *such* Majesties must be worth knowing."

"It is *you* that ought to be invited to the Winter Palace, Sal," answered Helen enthusiastically. "Talk of sacrifice! It is you that made the only real sacrifice. As for me, of course I went with the man I loved; but you——"

"Of course I went with the woman I loved," retorted Sal, laughing at her counterstroke.

"What claim had I on you? And yet you gave up everything for me, and toiled like a slave to make me and mine happy. Oh, papa, mamma, when I think of all that Sal Willing has been to me and my children all these years,

I blush to hear the word 'sacrifice' applied to me. Here is the real heroine !”

They were all so absorbed in the contest between Helen and Sal, that they were startled by a deep husky voice, which said :

“That’s right, lass ! Tit for tat : one good turn deserves another.”

The voice belonged to a big, grey-headed old man who had just entered the room. “Gentleman,” I was going to say ; but “man,” on the whole, safer. Dressed like a gentleman ; but fine clothes, sitting awkwardly on big unwieldy frame, loudly proclaimed the unfashionable creed, “The tailor does *not* make the man.” Respectable enough ; but so coarse and rough, that few in that company would have called him a gentleman. Nose, too, bearing witness (happily by this time false witness) against owner. A “gentleman,” though, for all that !

To the astonishment of several in the room, the rough burly man threw his big brawny arms round “Miss Willing’s” neck, and hugged her like a bear.

“Oh, fayther, fayther !” cried Sal, clinging to the old man.

First slip of the tongue she had made !

Memory of old times ! First well-beloved name !

“Be ye Sal Willing ?” said Joey.

And he held her out at arm’s length, and gazed at her altered look, admiration kindling his purple face.

“Oh, father, I am so delighted to see you !”

“Well, lass, God A’mighty *hev*’ made a leddy on ye, and no mistake !”

“You may thank *that* lady,” said Sal, pointing to Helen.

“Ay, ay, God A’mighty *hev*’ helped her, as she said a’d help me to hatch the hegg.”

“I am glad to see you again, Mr. Willing,” said Helen, holding out her hand.

“The hegg *be* hatched, miss,” answered Joey, covering the outstretched hand with kisses ; “and ye sees what a big chicking *hev*’ come out on it. Oh, miss ! ‘And why not for yer own sakes, Mr. Willin’ ? And why not for Sal’s sakes, Mr. Willin’ ?’ Them words been my sheet-anker.”

And Joey Willing turned away. Helen fancied it was to indulge in his old peripatetic habits. But it was only to blow his nose. He was too much of a “gentleman” to do exe-

cution on the lying member in a lady's face; and yet his rising feelings had forced him to "perform the operation." As soon as the deed was done, he turned round again. Then Helen burst out:

"Oh, Mr. Willing, God has honoured me greatly in sending my words so deep into your heart."

Mr. Willing looked thoughtful for a moment, as if he were pondering the great problem, and, if he had been on a quarter-deck, would inevitably have taken a few turns over it. However, as there was nothing outward to help the delivery of his thoughts, he bolted them out in a crude form.

"Eh, miss," he said, "God A'mighty do hev' queer ways o' tinkering an ould pot. Happen God A'mighty sent ye Sal to pay ye for the hegg; and I be main glad as she been a-tryin' to pay off her ould fayther's debts."

"Whatever you think you owe me, she has paid ten times over, Mr. Willing."

"Avast!"

Joey could not take in that idea at all.

"I am speaking the sober truth."

"Eh, Sal, lass," said Captain Willing at length, "yer ould fayther be proud on ye.

And now, Sal, ye mun coom whome wi' me."

"And Mrs. W.?"

"God A'mighty hev' sent her to kingdom come," answered Joe solemnly.

"I must go with you then, father, to comfort you."

But Mr. Willing did not seem to stand in much need of comfort. Mrs. W. No. 2 had not left a very big gap in his heart.

"Hark ye, Sal," he said, "the fortin' be made; and I were a-goin' to Siberiar to look arter ye, when Mr. Cameron he tell me as how ye was a-coomin' back with miss yere."

Indeed, Joey had been in Petersburg for weeks, and had become free of Mr. Cameron's house.

Here dinner was announced. Mr. Cameron's establishment was on a grander scale than in Helen's days; and the French cook, who did the honours in the kitchen, had prepared a sumptuous banquet. Young and old shared it together, and vied with each other in doing honour to Helen Maleenovska.

When the cloth was removed, General Count Alexeyev rose, and in a humorous speech, in which he brought in the names of Joey and

Sal Willing most happily, and made more than one allusion to cannon-balls, proposed a toast :
The health of Captain Maleenovsky and his noble wife, *née* HELEN CAMERON.

END OF VOL. III.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 042061108